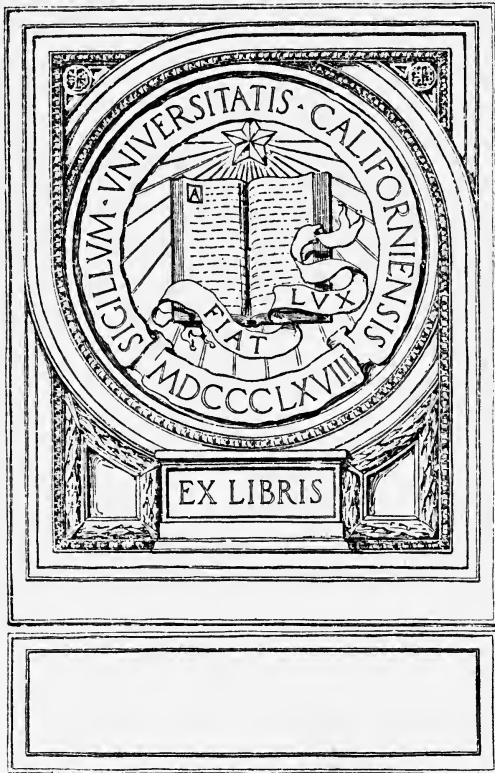
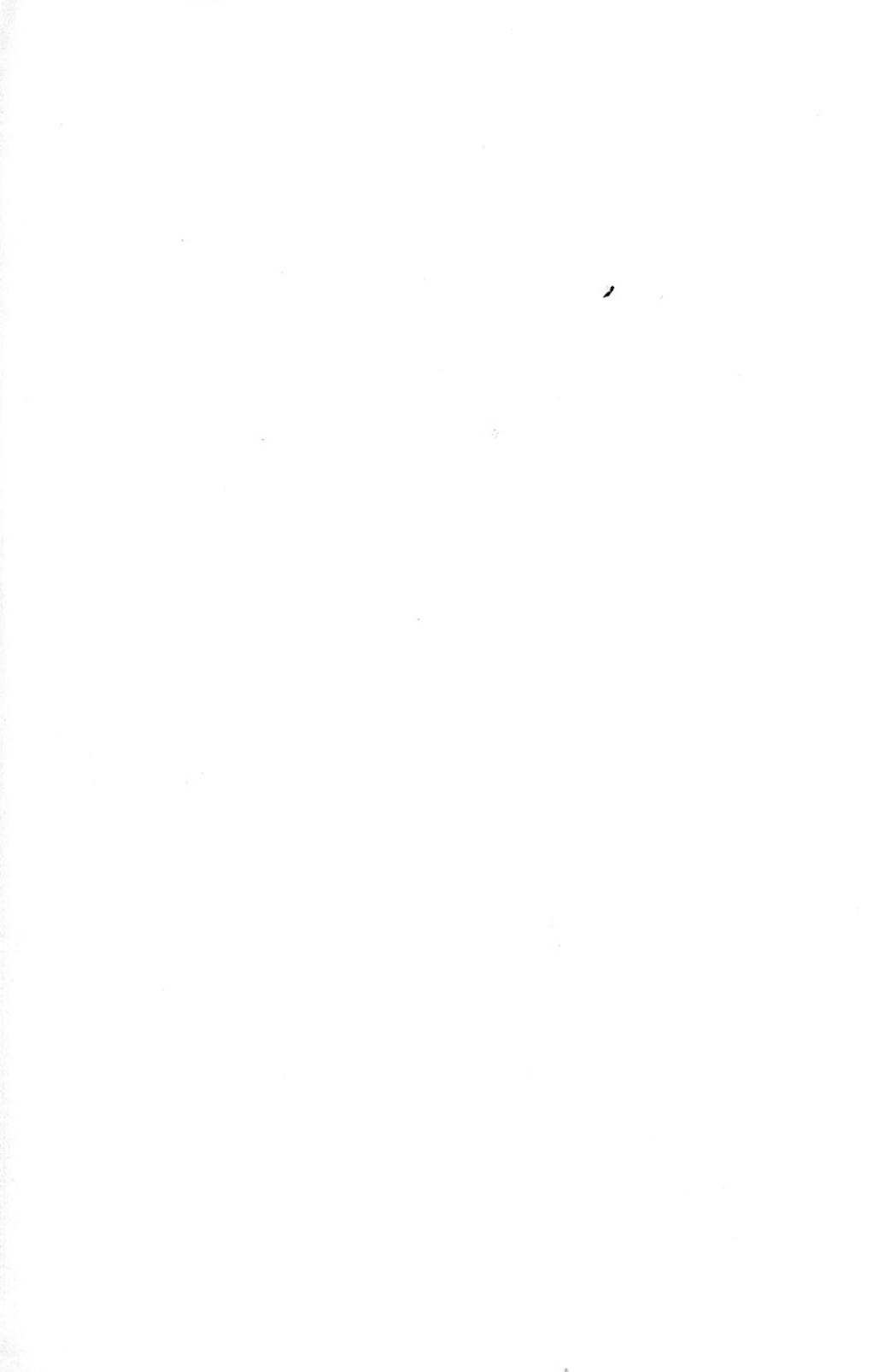




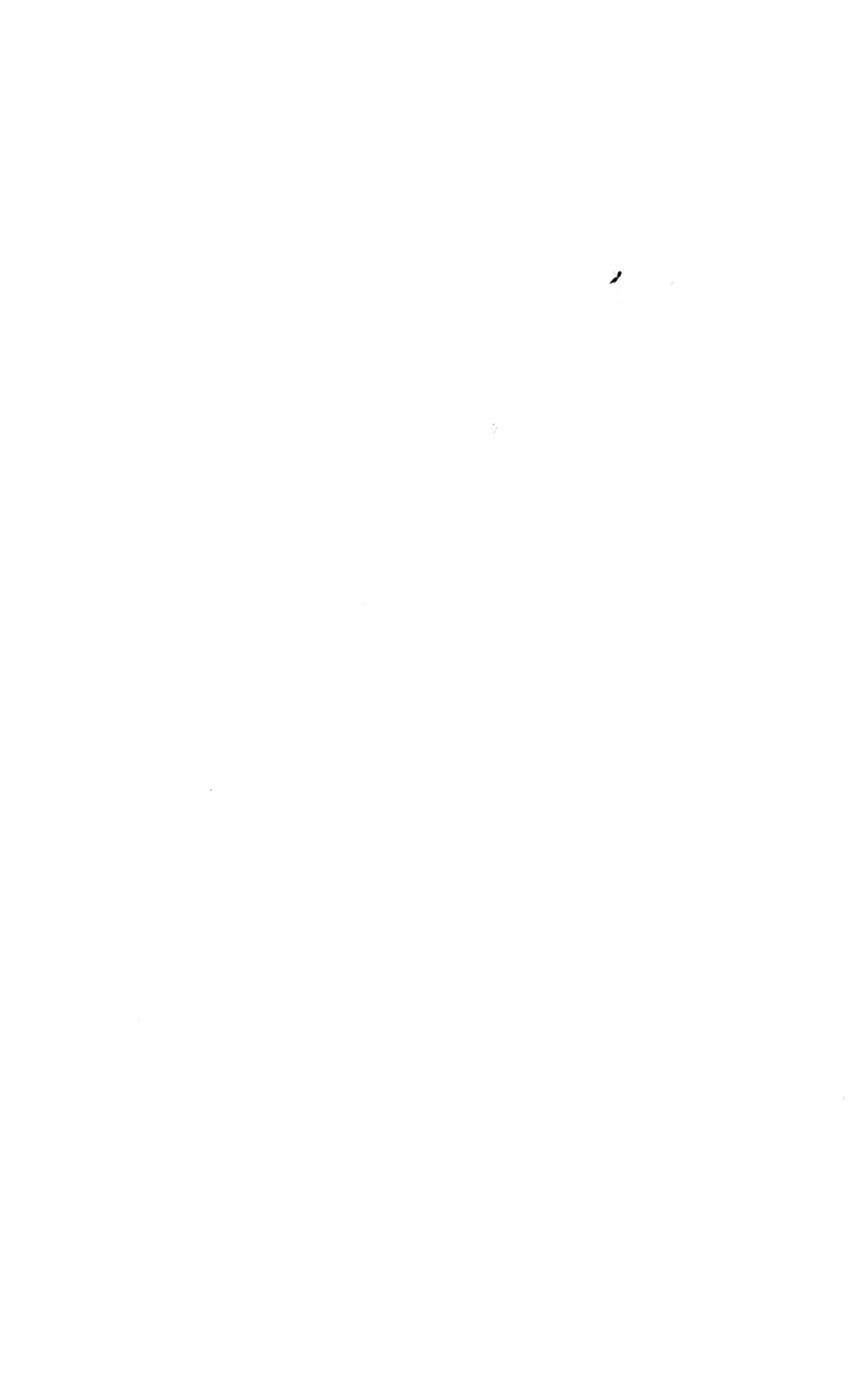
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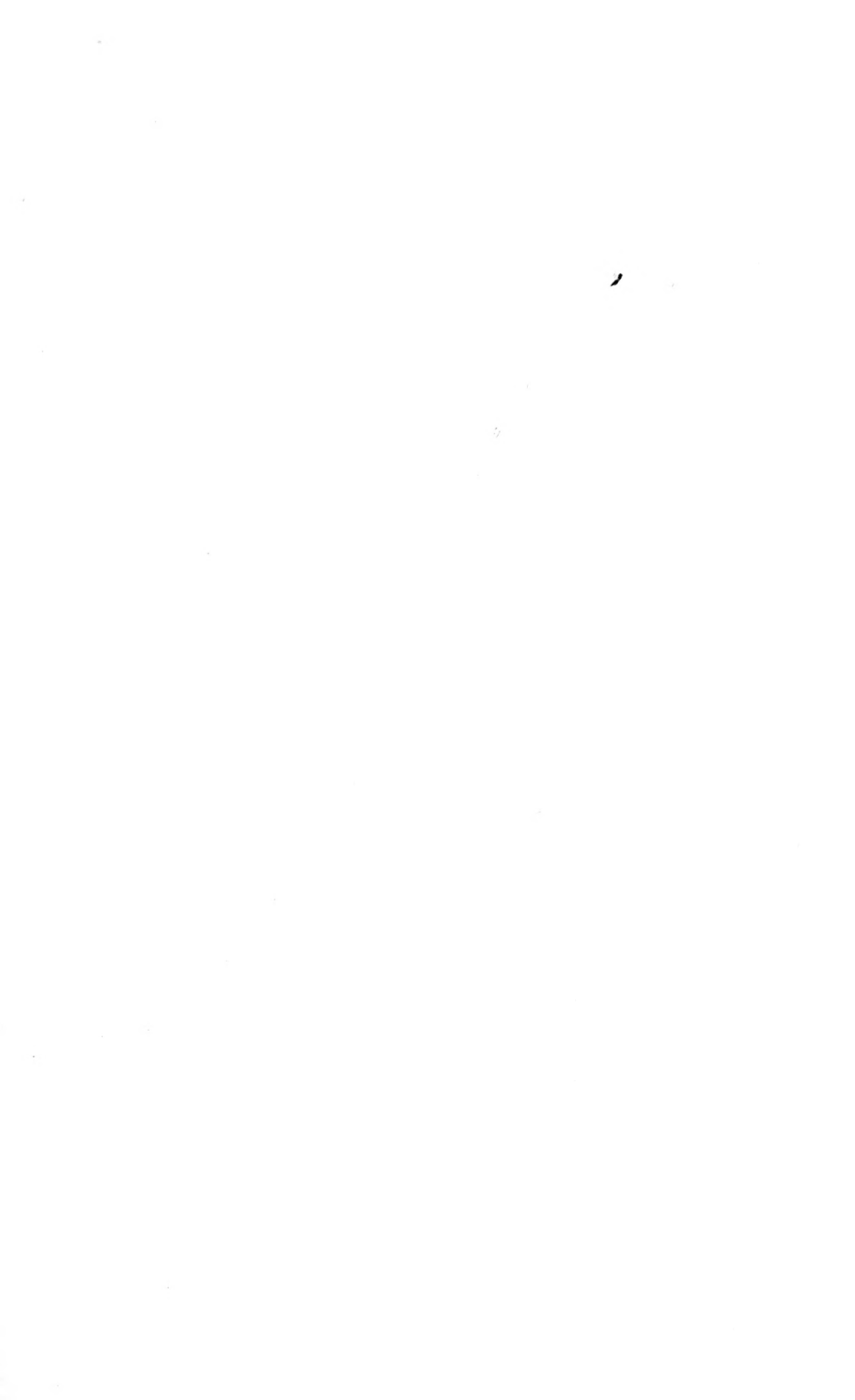










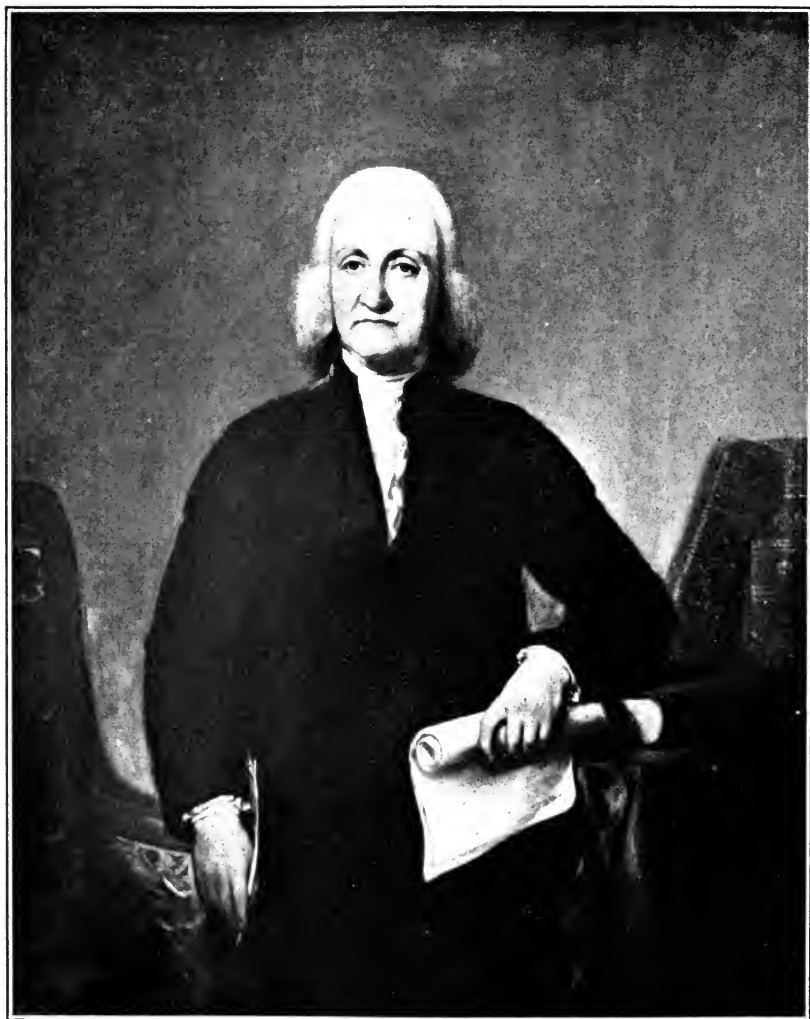




JONATHAN TRUMBULL







John<sup>th</sup> Framball Gov.<sup>r</sup>



# JONATHAN TRUMBULL

GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT, 1769-1784

BY HIS GREAT-GREAT-GRANDSON

JONATHAN TRUMBULL



BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1919

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Published, November, 1919

Not Satisfactory

NO. 1000  
ANNOUNCING

THE PLIMPTON PRESS  
NORWOOD MASS. U.S.A

## PREFATORY NOTE

**T**HIS life of his great-great-grandfather was completed by my father before ill health prevented his attending to its final publication, and his death in May of this year made it impossible to consult him while reading the proof.

E. M. T.

*September, 1919*



## PREFACE

SINCE the year 1849, when Isaac W. Stuart completed his "Life of Jonathan Trumbull, sen.", no attempt has been made to retell the story of that busy, useful and significant life. During the half century and more which has elapsed since Stuart's day, the history of the men and events of the American Revolution has been clarified by the lapse of time and by the labors of many able and scholarly historians, so that new views of the period have been adopted, leading to juster estimates of the times in which Governor Trumbull served his country and of the men of those times. Many documents which Stuart was obliged to consult in manuscript are now accessible in the form of well edited print; and some important documents which were unknown in his day have since come to light. Such a family history, too, as the recent genealogy of the Higley family by Mrs. Johnston throws new and important light on the family and personal traits of Governor Trumbull's mother; and the Reverend Edward Robinson's sketch of the descendants of William Robinson does equally important service in the case of Governor Trumbull's wife. The statements which have recently appeared in print regarding Trumbull's connection with the Conway cabal, and regarding his feelings

towards Schuyler require, of course, careful investigation and treatment for which there was no necessity half a century ago.

These, and many similar considerations constitute an apology for a new life of Connecticut's revolutionary governor. The apology would not be complete, however, if the writer should fail to confess that his undertaking is prompted, to a great degree, by a spirit of reverence for the memory of a worthy ancestor. Just for this reason, it has been the aim of the writer to avoid the extravagant eulogy which abounds in Stuart's work; to tell the story simply and impartially, and to search diligently for the truth in this long period of public service. The attempt has been made to let the life-story speak for the man, in the full conviction that in no other way can justice be done him. Reverence for his memory leads to the belief that in no other way would the man himself allow the story to be told if the telling were within his control.

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# JONATHAN TRUMBULL

## CHAPTER I

ANCESTRY — EARLY SURROUNDINGS — AT  
HARVARD COLLEGE

THE surnames Turnbull and Trumbull can only be presumptively traced to a Scotch peasant who appears on the official record in the year 1315 as “Willielmo dicto Turnebull”, to whom King Robert the Bruce grants “a reddendo of one broad arrow at the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.” This appears to have been a grant of land in Philiphaugh, a short distance west of Rule Water, as a reward for saving the king from the attack of an infuriated bull in the forest of Callender, near Sterling. Together with this estate, a coat of arms was granted this peasant, with the device of three bulls’ heads and a motto which in the hands of various branches of the family reads either *Audaces fortuna juvat*, *Audaci favet fortuna*, or *Fortuna favet audaci*.

It is interesting to read the story as Doctor John Leyden tells it with a poet’s license, in his “Scenes of Infancy” after nearly five centuries had thrown their glamour over it:

“Between red ezlarbanks, that frightful scowl,  
Fringed with grey hazel, roars the mining Roull;  
Where Turnbolls once, a race no power could awe,  
Lined the rough skirts of stormy Rubieslau.  
Bold was the chief from whom their line they drew,  
Whose nervous arm the furious bison slew,  
The bison, fiercest race of Scotia’s breed,  
Whose bounding course outstripped the red deer’s speed.  
By hunters chafed, encircled on the plain,  
He frowning shook his yellow lion mane,  
Spurned with black hoof in bursting rage the ground,  
And fiercely toss’d his moony horns around.  
On Scotia’s lord he rush’d with lightning speed,  
Bent his strong neck to toss the startled steed;  
His arms robust the hardy hunter flung  
Around his bending horns, and upward wrung,  
With writhing force his neck retorted round,  
And roll’d the panting monster on the ground,  
Crushed with enormous strength his bony skull;  
And courtiers hailed the man who *turned the bull.*”

Thus the peasant becomes enrolled among the heroes of a nondescript mythology, of so recent a date that he has also been made the butt of ridicule. There is no doubt, however, that from him the once powerful Scottish clan of Turnbull took its origin, becoming famed for legitimate warfare, and later for border reiving and ruffianry in the days when the cry was *steal or starve*, with a strong preference for the former, in which the Turnbolls kept such good company as the Murrays, Jardines, Bells, Lindsays and others. As the clan grew more lawless it was found necessary to send armed forces to subdue it, by which summary process the Turnbolls, weakened by the attacks of rival clans, were finally

dispersed and broken up, their extinction as a clan probably dating from 1545, when twelve of their castles and two of their towns were destroyed by the English. Some of the survivors were scattered through England, and some remained on their native heath to the close of the seventeenth century, or longer.

It is hardly probable that a distinct pedigree of Jonathan Trumbull will ever be traced showing his descent through all the generations from "the man who turned the bull" in or about the year 1315. It can only be said, in the absence of all other clues to his origin, that the theory of his descent from the originator of the clan Turnbull is plausible. The corrupted spelling of the name is accounted for by the late Doctor J. Hammond Trumbull with the surmise that the Scotch pronunciation gave such prominence to the letter r that it first caught the ear of the scrivener, who in pursuance of the usual phonetic spelling of the surnames of the day wrote Trumbull for Turnbull, and even went further by spelling the last syllable b-l-e, as it is usually found in the English and American records of the sixteenth, seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries. Scotchmen tell us that the name is spelled Turnbull and pronounced Trumbull to this day.

To add to the plausibility of our theory, we shall find as his career develops that Governor Trumbull was possessed of traits of character which are distinctively Scotch. His tenacity of purpose, his indomitable perseverance, his keen sense of duty,

and the deeply devotional and religious spirit which animated and informed his whole career are so conspicuous and so Scottish that they seem to mark the man and his race. In his diplomacy, too, there is much that the Scotch would call "canny," though there is in his self-forgetfulness and in the breadth of his views much that emancipates him from the narrow significance of this term which it is so difficult to acclimate in our own country. These leading traits, so plainly marked in his life, were, of course, modified and adapted to conditions quite different from those in which they first took root in their native soil. Then, too, there were, no doubt, hereditary traits from the maternal side which modified the more stolid, hard-headed racial characteristics in a way to fit him for a career which called for alertness and promptness of action, in which he was never found lacking.

Passing over the long hiatus in his pedigree from "Willielmo dicto Turnebull", we come to the year 1635, at which time it is established by the researches of Mr. J. Henry Lea that one John Trumble, a cooper of Newcastle-on-Tyne, married Ellinor Chandler, and came to this country in 1639 with his wife and only surviving child John, an infant in arms. Cooper though he was, the first American Trumbull was town clerk and schoolmaster at Rowley, Massachusetts, where he settled upon his arrival. "The hurrying pen of the stripling", John Alden the pilgrim, also a cooper, showed a no more clerkly hand than did the pen of the cooper John Trumbull. By a singular chance it happened



some generations later that the Alden and Trumbull blood mingled in the marriage of Governor Jonathan Trumbull and Faith Robinson.

With a father who, besides being a cooper, was a schoolmaster and town clerk, we may infer that the educational advantages of the son John were unusual for the time. In due course of events, he married Deborah Jackson, and removed to Suffield, Connecticut, where four sons, named John, Joseph, Ammi and Benoni, were born to him. John was the grandfather of the lawyer-poet John Trumbull, now chiefly remembered as the author of "McFingal"; Joseph was the father of Governor Jonathan Trumbull, whose life forms the subject of this biography; and Benoni was the grandfather of the Reverend Benjamin Trumbull, whose colonial history of Connecticut in two large volumes is still the standard for that period.

Joseph, in whom as the father of Jonathan Trumbull our interest centers, was born in 1678 at Suffield, where he passed the first twenty-five years of his life. Like the young men of his day he learned farming, and developed a tendency to trade which stood him in good stead later in life. In 1703 he removed to Simsbury, attracted thither, no doubt, by Mistress Hannah Higley, whom he married on August 31, 1704. Her lineage, passing as it does into that of Jonathan Trumbull, deserves at least passing notice.

She was the daughter of John and Hannah (Drake) Higley, and was born at Simsbury on April 22, 1684. Her grandparents were Jonathan

and Katherine (Brewster) Higley, the grandmother being "clearly of the ancient Brewster family of England to which belonged 'Elder' William Brewster of the *Mayflower* fame."<sup>1</sup> The story of the early days of Hannah Higley's father reads like a romance. Apprenticed to a glover in London at the age of fifteen, he was given by his hard taskmaster two days' notice of a whipping in store for him. Determined to free himself from such thralldom, he secretly departed before the whipping fell due, and stowed himself away on board a vessel bound to America, at the risk of severe and cruel punishment under the laws then applying to apprenticeships. Upon discovering himself to the captain of the vessel, he arranged, for his passage, to sell his services during his minority to any American settler who would pay a price satisfactory to the captain. Fortunately, the vessel was bound to Windsor, Connecticut, where she arrived some time in the year 1664, and young John Higley was then and there bound to the service of John Drake for a sum satisfactory to the captain. Seven years later he married the granddaughter of his former master, and became a man of note in Simsbury, becoming a justice, a judge of the county court, a deputy to the General Assembly for many years, and captain of the Simsbury trainband. Hannah Drake, whom he married, was of the ancient and honorable Drake family of England which includes the sea-king, Sir Francis Drake. Her American ancestry dates back to Dorchester, Massa-

<sup>1</sup> "The Higleys and Their Ancestry", by Mary Coffin Johnson.

chusetts, in 1630, and her English ancestry to the Norman conquest, or earlier. Her mother was Hannah Moore, a daughter of Deacon John Moore, a man of note in Dorchester, who came to Windsor with the Reverend John Warham, probably with the ill-fated expedition of 1635.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the children of Joseph Trumbull, through the Drakes and Moores, had by inheritance an earlier claim on New England and Connecticut soil than he himself had, and through the sterling blood of the Higleys, Brewsters, Drakes and Moores took on hereditary qualities which mingled well with those of the Trumbulls.

The enterprising young couple did not remain long in Simsbury; for within a year from the time of their marriage, we find them at Lebanon, a town which had been recognized by the General Assembly just five years before, and which in the same year of their arrival, 1705, had for the first time reached the dignity of taxation and representation in the General Assembly. If Joseph Trumbull cannot strictly be called one of the pioneers of Lebanon, he comes so near that distinction that it is safe to say that he shared in the inconveniences, hardships and privations of the first settlers, and doubtless found work enough for his stalwart young arms in clearing the land of his first grant for cultivation. He made no mistake, however, in casting his lot with this new little community, for the soil proved rich and productive, and the location among the peaceful hills and valleys was charming and attractive.

<sup>1</sup> "The Higleys and Their Ancestry", by Mary Coffin Johnson.

Here, in this same year, was born his eldest son Joseph, destined to a short career with a sad ending; for at the age of twenty-seven, on a foreign voyage in the interest of his father's growing business, he was lost at sea, leaving a widow with two daughters. Doubtless he had become, at this time, his father's right-hand man, and doubtless, too, much of the father's success and prosperity were due to this son.

But the father's energy and confidence in his location and in his power to win his way laid the sure foundation of this success and prosperity. Some three years after settling in Lebanon he bought the homestead of the Reverend Joseph Parsons, the first minister of the town, mortgaging it — as an indication of small means and large faith for the time — for £340. Here, no doubt, in the first Lebanon parsonage, Jonathan Trumbull, with whose career we are chiefly concerned, was born, on October 12, 1710. He appeared on the stage at the beginning of a peaceful and prosperous time for the little colony of Connecticut and for the new and fast growing town of his birth. England, with Queen Anne on the throne, had so busied and satiated and sickened herself with war and conquest in the brilliant campaigns of Marlborough that the American colonies appear to have been forgotten for the time; at least, no such interference as had been the rule during the last half of the previous century occurred. For fifty years this little colony had been engaged in a struggle to establish her rights under the charter of 1662;

and those rights, with some wrongs, were at last established by the absorption of New Haven, the downfall of Andros, the discomfiture of Fletcher, and something like a final decision regarding Connecticut's boundaries, if we leave the South Sea out of the question. With the absorbing interest in home affairs diverting the Mother Country from active interference in the affairs of the American colonies at this time, the little communities of trading farmers composing the towns of Connecticut were left free, for the time being, to direct their own affairs in frequent town meetings, proprietors' meetings and patentees' meetings, with representation in, and appeal to, the General Court or Assembly when needed.

One of the most active of these little communities was Trumbull's native town and lifelong home. As a boy, in the intervals of study, hoeing and feeding chickens and cattle, he heard, no doubt, much talk of boundary disputes, of church matters, of prices of farm produce and live stock, of the news, some months old, from England; and tried in a boy's way to understand it all. Here in Lebanon, too, the meetinghouse war was brewing; and here, too, as well as elsewhere, the Mohegan case was brewing, to cause him infinite labor and solicitude in the days of his governorship some sixty years later.

Of schools, either public or private, we find no trace in Lebanon in the days of Trumbull's boyhood. It is safe to say that the traditions of three generations on his father's side, and four generations

on his mother's side, made them both deeply conscious of the importance of a good education for their son. And a good education they certainly gave him—as good as American facilities of the time afforded. After a course of such elementary studies as his parents could bestow, there is little or no doubt that he was grounded in sufficient Latin and Greek to fit him for college by the Reverend Samuel Welles. Welles was then pastor of the village, and his house, fine for the times, with its quaint frescoes and handmade woodwork, still stands on Lebanon Green.

If there were any exceptions to the rule of social equality which existed in the town at this time, one exception might be found in the case of this same Reverend Samuel Welles, whose aristocratic Boston connections had enabled him to build the handsomest house in Lebanon. After his tutorship to the boy Trumbull, he removed to Boston, where he occasionally met his former townsman, Joseph Trumbull, the father of his pupil, whose business as farmer and drover sometimes called him to that city. His recognition of the elder Trumbull was sometimes cold and sometimes altogether lacking, as, in his farmer's garb, the latter seemed an unfit acquaintance to introduce among the pastor's city friends. Pastor Welles made occasional visits to Lebanon, where he still retained some landed interests, and on one of these visits he met the elder Trumbull and cordially extended his hand to him. Retaliation then and there ensued, for Trumbull, refusing the proffered hand, said simply, "No,

sir; if you don't know me in Boston, I don't know you in Lebanon." <sup>1</sup>

This story, said to be authentic, illustrates, too, the independence and social equality which existed in Lebanon in the days of Jonathan Trumbull's boyhood. The inhabitants were at this time practically all freeholders and all farmers; they had possessed the land on equal terms, and each man felt himself as good as his neighbor; every inhabitant was well — perhaps sometimes too well — acquainted with every other inhabitant, and social distinctions were practically unknown. It should be remembered that the formative period of Trumbull's life was passed in the influence of such a community. Beyond the inspiring sight of the frequent evolutions of the trainband on Lebanon Green, the boy had little diversion in the midst of the practical, puritanical, and quietly strenuous life of the day.

At the age of thirteen, he entered Harvard College, where his enrollment, according to the custom of the time, placed him twenty-eighth in social rank among the thirty-seven graduates of his class.<sup>2</sup> This order was established during the Freshman year, and there is little doubt that it was during this year that he got a taste, at least, of the social distinction which was so foreign to his native soil. This custom of enrolling, and probably of granting privileges to the students, according to rank, prevailed at Harvard for the first century and a quarter

<sup>1</sup> Hines, "Early Lebanon", p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Quinquennial Catalogue of Harvard University, 1900; p. 83, footnote.

of its existence, as it prevailed at Yale for sixty-five years, but at last caused so much complaint, as the democratic sentiment of the country grew, that it gave place in 1772 to enrollment in alphabetical order. A system, also, quite similar to the fagging system of the higher English schools, had not altogether died out when Trumbull entered Harvard as a Freshman. There can be no doubt that the spirit of this lad of thirteen, reared in the free air of Lebanon's social equality, rebelled against this fagging system and against the social distinctions which the plan of enrollment created. Flogging was still publicly administered to students,<sup>1</sup> and was perhaps still preceded and followed by prayer from the president of the college in Trumbull's day, as in earlier ones. These austerities and the formalities which ruled at the time may have given to the young lad a touch of homesickness, bred of disgust. We have it on the authority of his son John, however, that he diligently pursued the studies of his course, and acquired "a sound knowledge of the Hebrew, as well as the Greek and Latin languages, and of all the other studies of the day", and became, "a distinguished scholar."<sup>2</sup>

From the diaries of President Leverett and of President Wadsworth, who succeeded him during Trumbull's course at Harvard, we get some idea of the studies pursued at the time. At morning prayers, each student of the three upper classes

<sup>1</sup> Quincey's "History of Harvard University", vol. 1, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel John Trumbull's "Autobiography, Reminiscences and Letters", 1841; p. 2.



was called upon to read a verse out of the Old Testament from the Hebrew into the Greek, the Freshmen reading from English into Greek. President Wadsworth states in his diary that he expounded the Scriptures to the students, once eleven, and sometimes eight or nine times in a week. In the regular curriculum, Tully, Virgil and the Greek Testament occupied four full days of each week in the Freshman year; rhetoric one morning, and the Greek catechism another morning, with disputations on Ramus's Definitions for two mornings toward the end of the year.

The Sophomores "recited" Logic, continued to "recite" the classical authors, Heereboord's Meletemata, and Wollebius's Divinity, with morning disputations on Mondays and Tuesdays.

The Juniors continued Heereboord's Meletemata, Wollebius's Divinity, and the two morning disputations, adding Physics, Ethics, Geography and Metaphysics.

The Seniors "recited" Arithmetic, Geometry and Astronomy, "go over the Arts towards the latter end of the year, Ames's Medulla on Saturdays, and dispute once a week."

Thus it will be seen that a course at Harvard beginning in 1723 was a much nearer approach to a course in divinity than our present academical courses afford. It should be added that the Harvard studies at this time comprised a special course in Hebrew conducted by Judah Mones, a converted Jew, whose lectures and exercises were attended by those upper classes on four days in the week.

The atmosphere was distinctly religious, and early in his college course we find Trumbull giving indications of that deeply religious and devotional spirit which pervaded and informed his entire public and private life. In his Freshman year he became a member of a secret religious organization, whose simple Articles of Association may still be read, breathing a spirit of deep devotion and Christian charity.

## CHAPTER II

HARVARD GRADUATE — CLASSMATES AND COLLEGE  
MATES — LICENSED CLERGYMAN — CALL TO CHURCH  
AT COLCHESTER — LOSS OF HIS ELDER BROTHER —  
CALL DECLINED — BEGINNING OF MERCANTILE  
CAREER

**I**N 1727, at the age of seventeen, young Trumbull returned to Lebanon, a full-fledged Harvard graduate, with the then customary degree of A.M. In the still small, growing community of his native town, it is safe to say that he was, at the time, regarded as a wonder of learning; for Lebanon was then sending few, if any, of her young men to college; and a man of collegiate education had a marked distinction in such a town. He had acquired a knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, as we have seen, with finishing touches of divinity, geography, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy; and he had gained experiences and formed associations which were, perhaps, even more important than all these studies.

Notable among his classmates stands Thomas Hutchinson, destined for a career quite similar to Trumbull's in official positions, but diametrically opposite in political principles, and ending in the pathetic story of a ruined fortune and a life of exile. How far Hutchinson's rank of third in social standing by Harvard registration removed him

from free intercourse with Trumbull in his rank of twenty-eighth, or how congenial these two lads may have been to one another, it is impossible to say. It must be true, however, that the coterie of about one hundred and fifty undergraduates of the time should have been, during their college course, in much closer contact than the great bodies of undergraduates in our universities of to-day. Hutchinson was just a year younger than Trumbull, so it is not necessary to regard the latter as an infant prodigy because he entered college at the age of thirteen, which, as far as can be ascertained, was about the average of Freshmen at the time. Another classmate, Benjamin Church, is erroneously supposed by Stuart to have been the Doctor Benjamin Church who in 1775 was convicted of secret correspondence with the enemy, and was sent, by Washington, to Connecticut for safe keeping under the direction of the Governor and his Council of Safety. This Benjamin Church was of the class of 1754, and had probably never seen Governor Trumbull.

It is a notable fact that all the other Harvard students of his time who attained much distinction were loyalists in Revolutionary times. In the class below him was Jonathan Belcher, afterwards Chief Justice of the Superior Court, and Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, to which land his Tory principles compelled him to flee. In Belcher's class, too, we find Edmund Trowbridge, another Judge of the Superior Court of Massachusetts, a loyalist who, according to Sabine, was so favorably

regarded by his countrymen that he remained at home, unmolested, during the Revolution. In Trumbull's Senior year, there appeared a Freshman of thirteen at Harvard, named Peter Oliver, whom any Senior might send on errands under the fagging system then prevailing, and who, forty-six years later, was Chief Justice of Massachusetts, and obliged to flee to Halifax on account of his loyalty to King George III. This same Oliver is lampooned by John Trumbull in his "MacFingal." His brother Andrew of Stamp Act fame was a Junior when Trumbull entered Harvard as a Freshman. Another member of Oliver's class was Eliakim Hutchinson of Boston, who, though he died in 1775, was well known to be a loyalist of high social standing, a member of the Council and Judge of one of the Courts of Massachusetts. In the same class we find Thomas Steele of Leicester, Massachusetts, a town clerk, Representative in the General Assembly, and Judge, standing in his class fourth in social rank, "a man of high respectability of character" who "possessed the confidence of his fellow citizens, though differing from them in political sentiments."<sup>1</sup> In this class, too, appears Josiah Edson, who, in the early days of the Revolution, gained the odious distinction of a "Rescinder" and "Mandamus Councillor", suffered mob violence, fled to Halifax, and died in New York in 1778. He also is mentioned in John Trumbull's "MacFingal", as "that old simplicity of Edson."

<sup>1</sup> Sabine's "Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution."

It would almost seem that in Trumbull's day at Harvard an influence prevailed which nearly a half century later bred Tories among the sons of Massachusetts and Whigs among the sons of Connecticut. A few exceptions may be found, as in the case of Benjamin Kent, a classmate of Trumbull's, who is doubtless the man of that name who, with Samuel Adams and others, addressed the people of Boston in 1774 at the Old South Meetinghouse in favor of Committees of Correspondence. In the class below was Josiah Quincy, Senior, less noted than his son Josiah, but of whom it is recorded that there was a plot against his life, and the life of Benjamin Kent.<sup>1</sup> A notable Connecticut Whig in the class below Trumbull's was the Reverend Nathaniel Eells of Stonington, who, at an advanced age, marched with some of his parishioners to the front at the time of the Lexington alarm.

Thus we find that of eleven Harvard students of Trumbull's day, including himself, seven became Massachusetts Tories, two Massachusetts Whigs and two Connecticut Whigs. The political sentiments which the other students espoused in the days of the Revolution are more difficult, perhaps impossible, to determine. Certain it is that of all the students of his day, identified and unidentified, Trumbull's political principles were of the most pronounced "Whig" character, and that the public offices which he occupied during the Revolution and the times which led to it enabled

<sup>1</sup> Letters and Diary of John Rowe, Boston, 1903; p. 224.

him, as we shall see, to do yeoman's service in the cause of his country. The keynote of the Revolution, "no taxation without representation", must have been instilled in his youthful mind in his boyhood days; for we learn from the official reports of the discomfited Governor Benjamin Fletcher that this cry was in the air in Connecticut as early as in the days of William and Mary; and we have seen, too, that Trumbull's native town of Lebanon was only admitted to representation in the General Assembly after presenting its grand list for taxation by that body. This same question of taxation with representation was doubtless discussed among the Harvard students of his day, and probably the Tory and Whig principles which pronounce themselves nearly half a century later among the eleven students just enumerated were espoused by them at the time.

Upon returning to his home at Lebanon, after completing his college course, it was decided that Trumbull should prepare for the ministry. This was, doubtless, his own choice, in view of the devotional and religious character of the young man. He united in full communion with the church at Lebanon, and commenced the study of divinity, in which his college course had already grounded him, with the Reverend Solomon Williams, his pastor, a man of prominence among the theologians of his day, who, at a later time, became engaged in theological controversies with the Reverend Andrew Crosswell, a college mate of Trumbull's, and with the famous Doctor Jonathan Edwards, Senior.

The course in divinity which Trumbull pursued was not, as we shall see, to bear fruit in the ministry, but that it bore some fruit we learn from the following well-authenticated story — a story which, when recently told to the Honorable James Bryce,<sup>1</sup> impressed him as a remarkable instance of the social and religious conditions of the times.

The favorite themes of discussion among the farm laborers of Lebanon — and Lebanon men were then practically all farm laborers — were of a theological character. There were times when the subject was too profound, or provoked too heated controversies. At such times it was agreed among the disputants that subjects of this kind should be referred to Mr. Trumbull. In the haying season especially, during the noon rest, he would, either by request or by his own inclination, join the men, listen to the questions they had reserved for him, and give them his opinion from the light of his theological studies. The opinions so given by him were taken as conclusive, and caused, no doubt, deep satisfaction in the minds of the men who had reserved their questions for his decision.

His studies in divinity appear to have occupied about three years, for on October 13, 1730, he received the license of the Windham Association, and the life and profession of a Congregational clergyman now opened before him.<sup>2</sup> Not long after this, his brother Joseph sailed upon a voyage

<sup>1</sup> By Doctor George P. Fisher.

<sup>2</sup> Some of his sermons, in manuscript are in possession of the Connecticut Historical Society.



to London in the interests of the growing business of his father, with which business the son Jonathan had also become somewhat familiar. At about this time he received a call to become pastor of the church of Colchester. The absence of his brother caused him, no doubt, to defer the acceptance of this call, for his father was now a man of fifty-four, and needed the help of one son in the absence of the other. But no tidings came from the absent son or from the vessel in which he sailed, and as weeks of anxious waiting grew into months, the sad conclusion that he had been lost at sea was forced upon the family. With the younger brother, duty<sup>e</sup> always came before inclination. He reluctantly declined the call to Colchester, and took the place of his elder brother, as the right-hand man of his stricken father.

Thus the young clergyman of twenty-two became the young merchant farmer, embarking upon a career which he pursued with varying fortunes for more than thirty years in the midst of active public duties. The change from the ministry to a mercantile life was doubtless a sad disappointment to him, but his keen sense of duty did not allow him to hesitate, and his faculty for doing with his might whatever his hands found to do soon led him to forget his regrets by means of the wholesomest of all anodynes, hard work. Of the kind and conditions of this work it is difficult to speak with exactness. His father having embarked in foreign commerce in addition to, or in connection with, his farming, the office work, correspondence

and more clerkly portions of the business naturally fell to the lot of the college-bred son. The father held at this time the military position of Quartermaster "of the Troop in the county of Windham", a county of six years' standing, comprising eleven towns, which, at the time of its establishment, contained a regiment of troops. This position, no doubt, during the two years in which he held it, furnished quite an amount of business in addition to the regular routine and new enterprises in which he was engaged.

## CHAPTER III

### HOME AFFAIRS — DELEGATE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY — MARRIAGE — THE ROBINSONS

THE old epigram, "Man proposes but God disposes", was most happily exemplified in the change from the comparative seclusion of a clergyman's life to the more active participation in the affairs of his fellowmen to which Trumbull was now called. It was, as it had been since his birth, still a time of peace and prosperity in the colony of Connecticut. The troubles attending the location of new meeting-houses, and the formation of new ecclesiastical societies in the various towns formed the nearest approach to war which these peaceful times afforded. A truce of more than thirty years had been declared in the Lebanon "meetinghouse war", so called, by an agreement between the existing First Society and the inhabitants of the northern portion of its parish to refund money which they had paid for church rates if they should within a given time be made a separate ecclesiastical society, as the southern portion had already been made. In Guilford, however, a controversy involving the rejection of the Saybrook Platform by a part of the congregation of the First Society was at its height at about this time, the efforts of the General Assembly having, as usual in such cases, proved

fruitless in reconciling the differences. It is quite probable that the Reverend Solomon Williams found the Guilford troubles a useful object lesson in expounding theology to his young student.

Church and State, we must remember, were practically one in these days, and the attempted settlement of difficulties among existing church societies and the establishing of new societies formed a large and not always successful part of the business of the General Assembly. To such an extent was this legislative control carried that an important qualification for a legislator was a thorough knowledge of the theological tenets of the day, as embodied in the Cambridge platform, the Saybrook platform, the Halfway Covenant, and other accepted beliefs of the Congregational Church, together with a knowledge of the code of church government. We have seen how important these matters were in the case of the haymakers and others to whom our young theologian expounded the vexed questions of the day. Thus, in 1733, the attention of the Lebanon freemen, when they were called to elect a new delegate to the General Assembly, was turned to young Jonathan Trumbull as a man well versed in theology and now, after some mercantile experience, conversant with the affairs of men as well. He was elected a delegate in this year, thus beginning a public career which he continued almost uninterruptedly for half a century. In the following year, he failed of a reelection, if, indeed, he attempted one, and was succeeded by Ebenezer West, who by the political methods of

the day, or otherwise, regained the position of deputy, of which he had been deprived in the previous year by the election of Trumbull. In 1736, William Throop, West's associate, gave place to Trumbull, from which date the record of his public service and offices is continuous up to the year 1783 when he declined the renomination for Governor.

The years 1734 and 1735 were devoted, probably, to business, with some notable exceptions. We find him in the latter year commissioned as Lieutenant in the "Troop of Horse", thus beginning his schooling in military life, an important factor in the public duties to which he was afterwards called. Far more important and far more engrossing, no doubt, during this year and perhaps some previous years, was his courtship of Mistress Faith Robinson who was in the habit of coming from her home in Duxbury, Massachusetts, to visit her sister Mrs. Eliot, wife of Reverend Jacob Eliot, the pastor of Goshen parish in Lebanon. The courtship, which is said by some to have been due to a business visit of Trumbull's to Duxbury, and by others to have begun in an acquaintance at Lebanon, resulted in his marriage to Faith Robinson on December 9, 1735. The marriage was a happy and suitable one. She was then a girl of seventeen, of Mayflower stock on her mother's side, and descended from a great-grandfather Robinson who came to Dorchester in 1635 or 1636. Her Mayflower descent was from the pilgrim John Alden, whose daughter Elizabeth, born in 1625, married William Pabodie of Duxbury, December 26, 1644. Their daughter

Priscilla married, December 10, 1679, Reverend Ichabod Wiswall of Duxbury, whose daughter Hannah married, January 31, 1705, or 1706, Reverend John Robinson, the father of Faith Robinson. As the marriage of Trumbull's father had given his children an earlier New England ancestry than his own, so the marriage of his son linked the family to a still earlier, and the earliest possible, ancestry of the kind.

It seems necessary to correct the statement which has appeared in Stuart's *Life of Trumbull* and elsewhere that Faith Robinson was lineally descended from the Puritan leader, John Robinson of Leyden. Until this statement was carefully investigated by the Reverend Edward Robinson in 1859, it was a cherished belief in the Trumbull family and in some branches of the Robinson family. The investigation referred to has resulted in the discovery of a distinct family tradition traced to the father of Faith (Robinson) Trumbull, to the effect "that there was no connection between him and John Robinson of Leyden."<sup>1</sup>

At the time of her marriage with Trumbull, Faith Robinson had been motherless for thirteen years, her mother having been drowned at Nantasket Beach while on the passage from Duxbury to Boston in a small coasting vessel; her oldest sister, Mary, also perished in the same sad disaster. Thus, at the age of four, Faith was left to the care

<sup>1</sup> "Memoir of the Reverend William Robinson . . . With Some Account of His Ancestors in this Country", by his son, Edward Robinson, N. Y., 1859; p. 62.

of an eccentric father and three older sisters, the eldest of whom was then fourteen.

A wrong impression would be given of her father if we characterize him solely as eccentric. He was a man of marked ability as a preacher, being original and forceful in his treatment of his subjects. He had a keen sense of humor and sometimes a forcible way of expressing himself, as when, after applying for an increase in salary, he was reminded of a previous increase besides the improvement of some thirty acres of upland in Weechertown. "Weechertown?" said he, "thirty acres in Weechertown? Why, if you were to mow it with a razor and rake it with a fine-tooth comb, you wouldn't get enough from it to winter a grasshopper." For thirty years he continued his ministry in Duxbury, until at last dissensions arose in his flock, leading him to ask for a dismissal from his pastorate, after having obtained judgment against the parish for arrearages in the payment of his salary amounting to £412, 10s. 6d. He then removed to Lebanon where two of his married daughters were living and where he bought of his son-in-law, Jonathan Trumbull, two tracts of land in Goshen parish. He died in Lebanon on November 14, 1745, at the age of seventy-four. The *Boston Newsletter* of the sixteenth of November contains a brief sketch of his life, closing with the following words:

"He was a learned and sound Divine; laborious and faithful in his Master's Vineyard. In civil life he was just, generous, of a cheerful and pleasant Disposition, and a faithful Friend."

To what extent the character and eccentricities of John Robinson were inherited by his daughter Faith it is, of course, impossible to say. Her mother was evidently a woman of fine character, deeply beloved by her husband and family, and esteemed most highly in the community. Her virtues were commemorated in verse by the Reverend Nathaniel Pitcher of Scituate, who makes personal mention of her in the following quaint lines:

“One of the Gowned Tribe and Family,  
Of bright descent and Worthy Pedigree;  
A charming daughter in our Israel,  
In virtuous acts and Deeds seen to excel;  
As Mother, Mistress, Neighbor, Wife, most rare;  
Should I exceed, to say beyond compare?  
Call her the Phoenix, yet you cannot lye,  
Whether it be in Prose or Poetry.  
For Meekness, Piety and Patience;  
Rare Modesty, Unwearied Diligence,  
For Gracious Temper, Prudent Conduct, too,  
How few of the fair sex could her outdo?  
Beloved of all while living, and now dead,  
The female Hadadrimmon’s lost their head.”

The virtues of the mother were certainly reproduced in her daughter Faith. One of many instances of her faithful motherhood is found in her unremitting care of her son John in the critical days of his infancy, when, by her patient, long-continued care, she saved him from the effects of malformation of the skull, which, without her constant, unwearying attention would have resulted in early death or prolonged insanity.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is that

<sup>1</sup> Colonel John Trumbull’s “Autobiography, Reminiscences and Letters.”



to her our country owes the brilliant career of Colonel John Trumbull, distinguished as a soldier and still more as a pioneer in American art, of whom more must be said as we follow the narrative of his father's life. That the mother inherited some of the more striking traits of her father we may learn later from her public contribution of her handsome scarlet cloak, the gift, it is said, of Rochambeau in the days of the Revolution,<sup>1</sup> and from her brave, inspiring words to her son, when, as she believed, she was parting from him forever, as he left his home in Lebanon to join the army at Cambridge.<sup>2</sup>

For forty-five years she shared the joys, cares and sorrows of her husband's life, during which time she faithfully reared a family of four sons and two daughters. These children were:

JOSEPH, born March 11, 1737. He was the first commissary general of the Continental army, and died on July 23, 1778, from the cares, hardships and fatigues of this onerous position. He married Amelia Dyer, in March, 1777.

JONATHAN, born March 26, 1740. He occupied the following positions: Deputy Paymaster-general, 1775; first Comptroller of the Treasury, 1778; secretary and first aide to General Washington, 1780; Representative in the first Congress of the United States under the Constitution, 1789; Speaker, House of Representatives, 1791; Senator, 1794; Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut, 1796; Governor, 1798 to the time of his death, — Aug-

<sup>1</sup> Stuart's "Life of Jonathan Trumbull, Senior."

<sup>2</sup> Colonel John Trumbull's "Autobiography, Reminiscences and Letters."

ust 7, 1809. He married, March 16, 1767, Eunice Backus.

FAITH, born January 25, 1743; married Colonel, afterwards General Jedediah Huntington. Her solicitude for the safety of her husband and brothers brought on mental derangement, resulting in her death on November 24, 1775.

MARY, born July 16, 1745; married February 14, 1771, William Williams, signer of the Declaration of Independence. She died February 9, 1831.

DAVID, born February 5, 1752; married Sarah Backus. He was actively employed in the State commissary department and in special service during the Revolution. He died January 17, 1822.

JOHN, born June 6, 1756; died November 10, 1843. He married an English lady in London. He was second aide to Washington in 1775; Major of Brigade, 1776; Adjutant and Quartermaster-general with the rank of Colonel, 1777. He pursued the study of art from an early age and became noted principally as an historical painter.

At the time of the marriage of Faith Robinson and Jonathan Trumbull the influence of the beginning of the Great Awakening had been felt in Connecticut. The solemn warnings of the great Jonathan Edwards had already been heard in Northampton, and had been echoed down the valley of the Connecticut, to be followed by the more exciting utterances of Whitefield, Tennent and Davenport in later years. Just how these warnings and this renewal of religious emotion, which at this time seemed dormant, affected young Trum-

bull's mind, we can only conjecture. That the situation awakened him to deep thought, perhaps to renewed devotion, there can be no doubt. But, so far as we can learn, his religious faith, like his political faith, was always active and needed no special awakening. To a man so liberal in his later views of toleration in religious matters and so imbued as he then and always was with the principles of political freedom, there can be no doubt that the Great Awakening which soon followed broadened and deepened his spiritual life and strengthened his well-grounded belief in the righteousness of liberty protected by law.

## CHAPTER IV

APPRENTICESHIP IN POLITICS — DEPUTY — SPEAKER  
OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES — ASSISTANT —  
NEW AND STIRRING TIMES — LIEUTENANT-COLONEL —  
JUDGE — MAN OF BUSINESS

IN the October session of 1736, Trumbull resumed what we may call his apprenticeship in political life by taking again the position of deputy for Lebanon in the General Assembly of Connecticut. Evidences are not lacking that in these early years of his public life he paid scrupulous attention to the duties of his position. Portions of his journal are still in existence, minutely recording the legislative proceedings of the time from the beginning of his first attendance. There is little in the journals which is of interest to the general reader, for the times were peaceful, and the record is purely official, being almost a duplication of the printed records of the colony of Connecticut for the time. Nothing appears to show his personal impressions or opinions on the questions before the house, the humdrum nature of which is so apparent as to leave little or no room for comment. The lack of personal opinions or impressions to be found in his journal and the few meager and inadequate reports of others regarding the personal appearance and character of the man leave much to be desired in the way of direct testimony. We

shall learn from later descriptions by his enemies that his height was five feet, seven inches, and that he was alert and graceful in his movements. Even when he had reached an advanced age, this same minute attention to minor details, which his journal discloses, made him appear ludicrous to some of the noblemen of the gay court of Louis XVI, who describe the Connecticut magistrate from the point of view of the French courtier visiting the America of Revolutionary days.

On March 11, 1737, his son Joseph was born. With this beginning of the dignity of fatherhood, the dignity of special committee work in the General Assembly was also first assigned to him. The committee on which he was appointed was instructed "to ascertain and fix a place" for erecting a meetinghouse in the New Concord Society of Norwich, now in Bozrah. It would seem that after the appointment of this committee the New Concord became the New Discord Society; for a re-appointment of the committee became necessary a year later, owing to the refusal of the owner to convey to the Society the land selected for the site of the meetinghouse; and upon the selection of another site, the Society petitioned for a change of location, which petition was, in the following year, referred to a new committee. Thus it will be seen that the first of Trumbull's numerous attempts at locating meetinghouses by direction of the General Assembly was not a successful one, though doubtless it was fruitful in experience. Perhaps for this reason, upon the appointment of a new committee

to settle the New Concord difficulties, he was immediately appointed on another committee to locate a meetinghouse in the North Parish of New London, which duty appears to have been performed on the first attempt.

This was in 1739, in which year he was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, having in the previous year occupied, for a short time, the position of Clerk. Thus the long political apprenticeship which he was still serving showed marked progress in this year, in his election to this advanced position at the age of twenty-nine. It was with him a year of progress in all directions, for at the October session we find him commissioned Lieutenant Colonel of the Twelfth Regiment of the colony. At the May session, too, he received his second appointment as "Justice of the Peace and Quorum in and for the county of Windham."

In his home at Lebanon he appears at this time as one of the promoters of a library company which formed the nearest approach to a public library which the times afforded. It bore the classical and high-sounding title of the Philogrammatican Library, and its privileges were limited to the use of shareholders who contributed fifty pounds each. The records of this library are in Trumbull's handwriting, and show that the purchase of a record book consisting of three or four quires of paper, covered with parchment, was in those days a matter of sufficient importance to require the vote of the shareholders. The catalogue includes such titles as "Moody's Gospel Way of Escaping the Doleful State of the

Damned", with numerous other theological, historical, medical and legal works, the nearest approach to light reading being "Lyrick Poems" by some author now unknown. Among the shareholders associated with Trumbull are to be found Eleazer Wheelock, founder of Dartmouth College, Samuel Huntington, signer of the Declaration of Independence and afterwards Governor of Connecticut, Thomas Clap, President of Yale College, and others almost as notable. This library company had an existence of more than half a century, and was finally dissolved in 1792.

The year 1740 opened to our young legislator a new experience, for the peaceful times of his earlier membership in the General Assembly now gave place to a formally declared war with Spain, in which Connecticut was to bear her part. Here began his long schooling in those warlike measures which his colony and State of Connecticut was to pursue almost uninterruptedly for the rest of his life. The war with Spain was soon to merge itself into the war with France, hardly interrupted by the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, and ending only in the fall of Quebec in 1759 and of Montreal in the following year.

During all these twenty years the little colony of Connecticut may be said to have kept herself on a war footing; and her soldiers were present in greater or smaller numbers in almost every engagement in these long wars. By the irony of fate, the very services of the colonies, which should have led the Mother Country to recognize Americans

as brothers in race as well as brothers in arms, led, instead, to the War of the Revolution, the clouds of which began to gather soon after the war with France, which was not officially ended until the treaty of Paris in 1763.

The first official announcement of the war with Spain came to Trumbull's ears, no doubt, as a new experience, in April, 1740, when the king's proclamation was sent to the towns in Connecticut by order of the Governor. One thousand men were called for from New England for the expedition against the Spanish West Indies. At the special session of the General Assembly which was held in the following July, active preparations were made for coast defences against incursions of the enemy, and for sending forward the Connecticut volunteers who had enlisted for the expedition to the West Indies. A special issue of £4000 was made for the payment of bounties to volunteers in this expedition. The colony, with its usual businesslike and statesmanlike promptness, entered at once into all the details needed for this sudden call.

This special session in July marks another important advance in Trumbull's political life; for we find him now on record for the first time as one of the twelve Assistants of the Colony, who, with the Deputy Governor, composed the Governor's council. Notwithstanding the bicameral system which had prevailed in the General Assembly since 1698, this was a council in fact as well as in name, and gave its members the most intimate relations with the administrative affairs of the colony.



To Trumbull, as a legislator and member of the Governor's Council, as a military man, and as a man of business, the warlike aspect of affairs bore a threefold significance. We may be sure that with him personal considerations came last, important though they were, for his numerous coastwise and foreign shipments were in danger of seizure by armed vessels of the enemy, and his mercantile interests at home and abroad were rendered insecure by the troublous times now beginning. Rumors of Spanish war vessels cruising off the harbor of New London and other Connecticut ports were rife; and Connecticut sailors and soldiers were joining the ill-fated expedition to the West Indies from which but one in ten returned.

Just what his public duties were at this time, beyond his assignments on committees, it is impossible to learn. The sessions of the General Assembly during the year 1740 were three in number and the regular sessions unusually long. We find him on a committee to investigate fraudulent transfers of real estate, and we find him in constant attendance as Deputy in May, and Assistant in July and October. The year, too, was one of both loss and gain in his family circle. The birth of his son Jonathan on the twenty-sixth of March was followed by the death, by drowning, of his only remaining brother, David, on the ninth of July, at the age of seventeen, thus completing the sad and fateful record of death by drowning of all the sons of his father's house excepting himself.

The position of Assistant to which he was elected

at the May session in 1740 was occupied by him until 1752, when he was again made Speaker of the House of Representatives, resuming the position of Assistant in 1754, from which time he held this office continuously until his election as Deputy Governor in 1766. In addition to these legislative duties, he held, for the twenty years beginning in 1746, the position of a Judge of the County Court of Windham, being also Judge of Probate for the district for the twenty years beginning in 1747. In 1766 he was appointed Chief Judge of the Superior Courts of the colony, which position he held until his election as Governor in 1769. During all, or nearly all, this period of thirty years from 1740 to 1769, he was actively engaged in business, becoming a prosperous merchant, and trading not only with the principal cities on the American coast, but with the West Indies, Ireland, England and Mediterranean ports. In 1767, however, he met with reverses from which he never recovered, though he afterwards attempted various business enterprises in the hope of retrieving his fortunes.

But all these experiences — political, judicial and mercantile — were needed to round out his preparations for the public life to which he was subsequently called in the times which tried men's souls through the eight dark years of the American Revolution. And through all this preparatory period, there is evidence of his scrupulous faithfulness in his varied duties as legislator, judge, soldier and merchant. That he had a natural love for work, which grew and strengthened as he advanced

in life, is plainly shown by the testimony of others and by the growing number of increasingly important duties assigned to him. And we shall find in a brief review of his services in the General Assembly that his business experience and judicial experience were freely drawn upon and put to good use, as was his knowledge of theology, which latter, as we have already surmised, had much to do with his first election as Deputy.

It must be remembered that it was in the atmosphere and influences which surrounded him from 1740 to 1767 that his most formative experiences may be found. The problems which confronted the little colony of Connecticut were many, and the experience of the legislators in solving them was a new one. The principles of democratic government were now tested as they had never been tested in the peaceful generation which had preceded that of 1740, and in the generations of the budding commonwealth of still more remote dates. Here was the problem of a new tenor and old tenor currency with its delusive issues of paper money which brought about an indebtedness of £131,000 upon a tax valuation of £900,000 in 1744. Here, too, was the question of Connecticut's position in Franklin's plan of uniting the colonies, a plan which, however the wise philosopher and statesman might modify it, seemed to strike a death blow to those charter rights which Connecticut had been struggling for ninety long years to defend and maintain. Here, too, was the difficulty of untangling the mass of red tape in which the pompous officials of the

Mother Country enveloped the claims of the colony to the remuneration which had been promised for expenditures in the war.

All this and much more Trumbull saw, and in a large part of it he shared. He saw, too, his own Connecticut general, Lyman, ignored in the official reports of the battle of Lake George which was won through his bravery and generalship, and for which William Johnson of New York was made a baronet. The inefficiency and even imbecility of such commanders as Webb, the Earl of Loudoun, and worst of all, if possible, Abercrombie, were most vividly brought to his notice, sometimes even in personal council with the men themselves, as when he served on a commission to accompany the Governor to Boston to confer with the Earl of Loudoun on war measures. On the other hand, the great Pitt and the chivalrous and brilliant Wolfe called forth his admiration from afar, so much so that he inserted in his journal a full copy of one of Pitt's letters regarding the need for prompt recruiting.

So far as the records and muster rolls show, Trumbull's own regiment, the Twelfth, of which he was made Colonel in 1753, saw but little service in the war with France. At times men to the number of fifty or so were drafted or enlisted from the regiment for an indefinite term of service; and at one time two companies of the Twelfth saw service of fifteen or sixteen days "in the Alarm for the Relief of fort Wm. Henry And places Adjacent In the month of August 1757." None of these services called for the presence of Colonel Trumbull in the

field; but we find that the details of men and impressment of horses were made by his order; and the payrolls of various companies show that the money was received by the soldiers "from Col. Jonathan Trumble of Lebanon."

By the time when his men were thus irregularly detached from his regiment for service, and long before this time, his position as member of the Governor's Council, as judge, and as legislator rendered his civil services so important that he could hardly have been spared, had he been called, for military service outside of his colony. His connection with military affairs was, however, so constant, that he became well versed in tactics, military usages and organization. It is fortunate, too, that the duties which kept him at home gave him a broader view of the stirring political life of the time than he could ever have gained in the narrower sphere of military campaigns. To a man of liberal education, keen perception, and unwearied devotion to duty, like himself, there was, in the active, many-sided life which he was pursuing at this time, a schooling for still higher duties which can hardly be overestimated. Among his correspondents at this time were his Harvard classmate, Thomas Hutchinson, and his Harvard contemporary, Andrew Oliver.

## CHAPTER V

PUBLIC DUTIES — ECCLESIASTICAL AND MINOR MATTERS — FINANCIAL AND JUDICIAL AFFAIRS — CAPTURE OF LOUISBURG — MASSACHUSETTS BOUNDARY — IMPORTANT CONFERENCES

IT is to be regretted that the records of the General Assembly during Trumbull's career as Deputy and Assistant give us no intimation of the debates and discussions which took place either in the House of Representatives or in the Governor's Council. Even the very full and almost garrulous diary of Joshua Hempstead has little or nothing to say of the proceedings of the General Assembly of which he was frequently a member at about these times; so that it seems that for a long time during the eighteenth century, the sessions of the General Assembly in the old statehouses at Hartford and New Haven were behind closed doors, and the public were only permitted to know what was determined and accomplished by the legislators of the time, with no intimation as to the means by which results were brought about. Thus we must content ourselves with knowing what duties were assigned to and performed by the legislator in whose career we are chiefly concerned.

These duties began to increase in number and importance from the time when he was first made Assistant in 1740. By special legislation this posi-

tion gave him, in these stirring times, authority as a magistrate in certain cases; and the Governor's Council, of which he was now a member, was expected to convene at times when the General Assembly was not in session, and at such times to act upon any emergency which might arise.

The record of the General Assembly shows that ecclesiastical affairs were often referred to him, either individually or as a member of a committee. As we have seen, he frequently located new meeting-houses; but other ecclesiastical matters more difficult of adjustment also fell to his lot. Irregularities in the payment of the salaries of pastors were sometimes complained of by the pastors to the General Assembly, with protests against receiving the depreciated old tenor money in payment and still louder protests against receiving no money at all. Such cases it fell to his lot to arbitrate and adjust, as it also fell to his lot to investigate applications for forming new ecclesiastical societies and to attempt adjustments of differences in existing ones. In two or more instances he was instructed to assume the position of chairman of meetings of societies called to discuss vexed questions. In 1741, too, we find him on a committee with Ebenezer Gay of Lebanon to thank the Reverend Solomon Williams for a sermon which he had preached to the General Assembly, — a duty regarded as more important and requiring more formality than would obtain in the present day, if the good old custom of preaching election sermons were still in existence. Although the adjustment of all these ecclesiastical

matters often required tact as well as a knowledge of theology, such matters may be classed to-day among the minor duties which Trumbull was called upon to perform.

In the same class may be placed numerous duties of a secular nature in connection with the financial and legal affairs of the colony, important though such affairs were. Among such duties entrusted to him were the revision of the laws of the colony and the task of preparing these laws for publication. He was first appointed on a committee for the purpose in May, 1742, with Roger Wolcott and Thomas Fitch as associates. The revision of the laws and the preparation of the manuscript for the printer appears to have taken seven years; for it is not until 1749 that a special act of the General Assembly empowers Trumbull to buy "three hundred and sixty-six reams of proper paper" for printing this edition of the revised statutes of Connecticut, for which purpose £2200 old tenor is placed in his hands, forming for us of the present time a problem as to the value of the paper and the value of old tenor money in 1749.

One of the devices for floating the new tenor bills of credit at the time of their issue was to loan such portions of the issue as were not needed for immediate use. These loans were made to freeholders in the colony on bond and mortgage, and in many instances it became necessary to foreclose the mortgages. Not only in such foreclosure proceedings was Trumbull made the agent of the colony, but as early as May, 1743, he was appointed



on a committee to receive and deliver to the Treasurer "mortgages not released for the first emission of loan money, and to adjust loan accounts with the Treasurer." He was made still more familiar with the details of the colony's finances by frequent appointments on committees to audit the Treasurer's accounts. After much experience in auditing, he was appointed in 1754 on a committee "to inquire into the state of the treasury, and endeavor to bring the Treasurer's accounts into good form"; or, in other words, to establish a new and improved system of bookkeeping for the Treasurer.

The first instance which the records show of a bill drawn and presumably introduced by Trumbull is in the May session of 1743, at a time when France had already secretly joined in military operations with Spain, and was soon to become the open enemy of England by formal declaration of war. The bill is entitled, "An Act providing Relief against the evil and dangerous Designs of Foreigners and Suspected Persons." After reciting the dangers to which the colony is exposed from strangers "endeavoring to sow and spread false and dangerous doctrines of religion among us, to stir up discord among the people, to promote seditious designs against the government, to alienate and estrange the minds of the Indians from us, or to spy out our country", the bill goes on to enact that all suspected persons may be brought before the Governor, "and such other of the civil authority as his Honor shall think proper to call to his assistance", who shall examine such suspected persons, and take

such measures as may be proper to prevent the dangers which may arise from them.

This measure was passed, probably as the result of a report made to the General Assembly by James Wadsworth, Elihu Chauncey, John Ledyard and Joseph Blackleach, who had heard startling rumors regarding the influence which certain foreigners had exercised over the Indians, estranging them from the colonists. The mover of the act evidently succeeded in making it broad enough to cover the case of the Indians, — and much more.

It is probable that many other measures of which he was the originator were passed, for the drafts of reports of committees of which he was a member are frequently in his handwriting, and almost invariably include a bill to be introduced to effect the purposes recommended by the committee.

It appears that when he was sojourning in Boston, Trumbull did not forget that he was a member of the General Assembly of Connecticut, and that he was in honor bound to recognize service to his native colony in the neighboring colony of Massachusetts, as the following extract from the General Assembly of Connecticut in 1748 will show.

“This Assembly being informed that Jonath. Trumble Esq<sup>r</sup>, being in Boston when one Isaac Jones, who was suspected to have been counterfeiting the seven shillings bills of credit on this Colony, was seized by a person who was exposed to great danger in doing the same, did as a gratuity bestow on him the sum of eight pounds old tenour, supposing it proper to be done for the honor of his

government: In consideration whereof, the Treasurer of this Colony is hereby ordered and directed to pay out of the publick treasury the aforesaid sum of eight pounds old tenour to the said Jonathan Trumble Esq<sup>r</sup>."

It is difficult, if not impossible to draw a hard and fast line in his long membership in the General Assembly between what may be called the minor duties and the important duties which he was called upon to perform. The Indian affairs of the time were more or less perplexing, and gave rise eventually to a most important suit known as the Mohegan case, which remained in court for nearly seventy years, and with the details of which he became thoroughly familiar. Encroachments of the reservations at Stonington and Groton granted to the remnant of the once powerful Pequot tribe of Indians were also referred to him in 1747, 1749 and 1750.

In March, 1744, war was formally declared between England and France. In the following May, military operations were rather prematurely begun in America. The French succeeded in capturing the blockhouse at Canso with its garrison of eighty men; but the English, with reinforcements from Boston, succeeded in holding the more important works at Annapolis.

Early in the following year, Connecticut was invited to join in the "mad scheme" of Governor Shirley of Massachusetts for the capture of Louisburg, the so-called Gibraltar of America, by an unaided colonial force. At the extra session of the

General Assembly in February, 1745, Jonathan Trumbull and Elisha Williams were appointed to go to Boston, to meet with commissioners from Massachusetts and other colonies, with power to arrange the details and preliminaries for the expedition on the part of Connecticut. They proceeded with all convenient speed, and returned at the expiration of nine days, for which service they were awarded thirty shillings per day, old tenor. This was doubtless the most important service which Trumbull had performed up to this time. Connecticut, with her usual promptness, had already provided for the enlistment of five hundred men, and for the despatch of the colony's sloop, *Defence*; and the return of the commissioners from Boston soon resulted in the embarkation of this military and naval force, giving Connecticut the distinction of being one of the three colonies which contributed to this surprising success in the beginning of King George's War.

In the following October, Trumbull was again busied in this affair by his appointment on a committee to ascertain the cost to Connecticut of this expedition, for reimbursement by the Mother Country; which reimbursement, after much red tape and repeated revisions of the account, was made four years later. The award was confined very strictly to the actual cost in money; and the home government appears to have avoided quite scrupulously any honorable mention of the service performed by Connecticut men. General Pepperrell was, indeed, made a baronet, and Governor Shirley was

granted a commission; but General Roger Wolcott of Connecticut, who was second in command, was ignored. The humble petition of the colony for a share in the prize money resulting from the expedition was also ignored; and Trumbull, who had an active share in preparing the accounts and the petition, saw the services of his colony treated with such parsimony that at the time he may have caught his first impressions of the mistaken colonial policy of Great Britain.

From the time of the capture of Louisburg in 1745, to the time of the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, Connecticut contributed her full quota — and more — for the projected but abortive expeditions against Quebec and Crown Point, losing many men by sickness, if not by the bullets of the enemy. The peace of Aix-la-Chapelle found this colony, in common with the others, suffering more than her full share of the effects of the war. The drain upon her resources of all kinds had been serious. The young men who had gone to the front, many of them never to return, could ill be spared in such a colony as Connecticut was at this time; the treasury, too, was depleted, and instead of the progress which might have been made in peaceful times, the colony showed little or no advance in population and worse than no advance in every other respect. The peace was a nominal peace only, and surrendered all the advantages which had been gained on this continent by handing back to France the stronghold of Louisburg which Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Hampshire had captured in the

masterstroke of the war, and leaving the boundaries of the English and French in America as indefinite as they had been before the war.

Even before this nominal and ineffective peace, Connecticut had on her hands a boundary dispute with her neighbor Massachusetts, in which Trumbull bore the part of leading commissioner for his own colony by four different appointments extending over three years. It was the most important of the many boundary disputes of its kind, and afforded to the leading commissioner another rare opportunity to familiarize himself with the charter rights of Connecticut, and to gain experience in negotiations of the greatest interest to his colony. The story of the dispute is, briefly, as follows:

In 1713, the towns of Woodstock, Enfield, Suffield and Somers had been transferred to the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, through a mistaken belief that they lay within the bounds of that colony, or might be taken by it as a final compromise of its claim. A very inadequate compensation was made to Connecticut at the time by the grant of certain unsettled lands in Massachusetts which were finally sold for the benefit of Yale College for a sum equal to about \$2500. These four towns had been so transferred without their consent and without royal confirmation of the transaction. After bearing the taxes and ecclesiastical control of Massachusetts for thirty-four years, they had recourse to the arbiter of political affairs, the town meeting; and addressed a petition to the General Assembly of Connecticut in May, 1747, for relief through a

joint commission or otherwise to determine their location by charter rights, which, as they justly claimed, placed them within the jurisdiction of their original colony. Jonathan Trumbull, John Bulkley, Colonel Benjamin Hall and Captain Roger Wolcott were appointed "Commissioners to meet and confer with such as may be appointed by the Province of Massachusetts Bay, at such time and place as shall be agreed on between them, to hear, consider, and report to the next Assembly after said meeting and conference, their opinion on what shall be offered in this affair by the Commissioners of said Province and the inhabitants of said towns."

That these commissioners had no difficulty in hearing what was "offered in this affair" by the said towns appears certain. That they were equally successful with commissioners of Massachusetts does not appear; for at the October session of 1747, it is recorded that Woodstock, Enfield, Suffield and Somers preferred another petition to the General Assembly of Connecticut, which recites that they had also petitioned to the General Assembly of Massachusetts for relief, and had found none. Trumbull is again appointed at the head of a commission to confer with Massachusetts and undertake a peaceable settlement of the vexed question. The matter drags along until May, 1749, when he is once more instructed to attempt similar negotiations, and this time provision is made for submitting the question to his Majesty in case nothing can be done with Massachusetts, a course hitherto avoided, through fear of its consequences, which fear had led to the

unfortunate compromise of 1713. But, in order to cut the Gordian knot and strengthen the hands of the commissioners, it is enacted at the same time that these four towns are within the charter limits of Connecticut, the old agreement of 1713 being null and void for this reason.

Once more, in October, 1750, he was appointed to attempt an amicable adjustment, Massachusetts being then more approachable; but nothing could be done, and after continuing the controversy with increasing feebleness and at longer intervals, Massachusetts appears to have dropped it in 1804. Her claim was founded on an old *ex parte* survey made by Woodward and Saffrey in 1642; one of the results of which is the possession by Massachusetts of the present city of Springfield which once belonged to Connecticut. An ugly notch in the northern boundary of Connecticut still remains a monument to the surveyors of 1642.

In October, 1755, the foothold of the English in Nova Scotia, after much border skirmishing and many attempts to gain the allegiance of the Acadians to British rule, had been effected by the crushing decree of exile proclaimed at Grand Pré in the September previous, by which seven thousand of these unfortunates were scattered among strangers in a strange land. In the previous July, Braddock's disastrous defeat had occurred, compensated in a measure by Lyman's brilliant victory at Lake George, for which, as we have seen, General Johnson was made Sir William. Once more the "dogs of war" were let loose, although the ceremony of



letting them loose was not proclaimed until the following year. The Albany Congress had failed — Connecticut assisting effectively in the failure to unite the colonies under a central government; but Connecticut was none the less willing to unite in a common cause with the colonies for defense against the common enemy. For this purpose, in October, 1755, the General Assembly appointed "Ebenezer Silliman and Jonathan Trumbull for and on the behalf of this Colony to meet with such Commissioners as shall be appointed by his Majesty's other government . . . to consider and represent the general state and circumstances of his Majesty's Colonies, the encroachments of the French, and the various transactions and operations hitherto, and to consult the proper measures to be taken for the general interest of the common cause, for his Majesty's service."

Governor Fitch accompanied the two commissioners to this conference, which was held in New York in the following December, and resulted in adopting a plan of operations for the coming year practically the same as that of the year then closing. It is interesting to know that at this time Connecticut had in active service in the field 3975 men, as we learn from public records signed by Trumbull, and that 3075 of these men were in the pay of the colony.

From this time forward, he was continually appointed on commissions in connection with war measures. In January, 1756, with General Phineas Lyman he went to Boston to arrange, if possible,

that Connecticut troops for the winter campaign be paid by the Crown. In the following January we find him on a commission with the Governor and others to confer with the incompetent Earl of Loudoun regarding the coming campaign; again in October to confer with commissioners from other colonies on war measures, and again in March, 1758, on a similar commission held at Hartford.

## CHAPTER VI

THE CASE OF THE SPANISH TREASURE SHIP —, DE-  
CLINES APPOINTMENT AS AGENT TO LONDON —  
FAMILY AND HOME AFFAIRS

THE foregoing examples of the duties which Trumbull performed are by no means an enumeration of all that were assigned to him up to 1758. With one exception they must serve to show the nature and variety of those duties: that exception is the case of the Spanish snow *San José y Santa Elena*, a vessel which, after springing a leak at sea, put in at New London in distress, on November 26, 1752, suffering further damage by striking on a reef just before reaching the harbor. Thirty-seven chests of Spanish dollars and three chests of Spanish gold coins, mostly "doubleloons", as a contemporary account calls them, were landed on the Sunday of the accident, and placed in Colonel Gurdon Saltonstall's cellar. The vessel being declared unseaworthy, the entire cargo, in which indigo appears to be the most notable commodity, was landed soon afterwards, in charge of Mr. Hull, His Majesty's Collector of Customs. A conflict of authority between Mr. Hull, acting under the orders of a court of admiralty, and Colonel Saltonstall, acting under the orders of the Governor, occurred a month later, in which the constable had some difficulty in preventing bloodshed between the armed forces of each party.

The ship *Nebuchadnezzar* was chartered by the supercargo, Don José Miguel de San Juan, to transport the cargo and treasure to Cadiz, and duly appeared at New London in April, 1753, for that purpose. Upon beginning to reload the cargo, it was found that it had been tampered with, and that some of the treasure and some of the indigo were missing. Don José Miguel de San Juan thereupon refused to receive any more of the cargo, and in the following October presented a petition to the General Assembly praying for relief, and requesting that the portion of the cargo already loaded be relanded and placed in the custody of Collector Hull. This petition was not granted, the General Assembly of Connecticut having no jurisdiction over His Majesty's Collector of Customs; and the affair dragged along another year, by which time it had begun to assume international importance. It was finally arranged that Jonathan Trumbull and Roger Wolcott, Junior, should go to New London by appointment of the Governor, supervise the reshipment of the cargo and treasure, gather all the evidence and adjust the matter as well as possible. Accordingly, two years after the landing of the cargo, these two commissioners went to New London, for this purpose.

This matter had now become still more complicated by the arrest and imprisonment of seven of the suspected thieves, who were indicted on the evidence of one of their number, and who escaped from jail within a month after their imprisonment, from which time history is silent regarding them.

The duties of commissioners Trumbull and Wolcott in this affair consumed a full month, beginning on December 3, 1754, and ending on the eighth of the following January. They attended scrupulously to the shipping of the cargo and treasure, consulted with the King's counsel in the affair, collected evidence, and after much diplomacy succeeded in mollifying Don José Miguel de San Juan, as well as Captain Whitnell of the British man-of-war *Triton* which was to act as a convoy to the *Nebuchadnezzar*. The conduct of the former gentleman is mentioned in the report of the commissioners as "in many respects very strange and extraordinary", and the latter is mentioned in Trumbull's diary as "dissatisfied with the treatment he had received", although "after some conversation he seemed more easy", and invited the commissioners to dine with him on the following day on board the *Triton*.

Two reports of the doings of the commissioners, the evidence collected, and the history of the affair were submitted to the General Assembly, showing quite plainly that the colony was in no way liable for the losses incurred. These reports were transmitted to the home government which had become quite concerned regarding the international bearings of the affair; and it is not until May, 1756, that we find the last mention of it in official correspondence; and even two years later, Jared Ingersoll, agent of Connecticut at London, was specifically instructed to represent the matter in a favorable light, if occasion should require. In home politics, too, it had its effect, being used as polit-

ical capital by the opponents of Governor Wolcott, on the ground that during his administration he had not proceeded with due promptness and vigilance in the matter.

Although we are mainly concerned with the manifold public duties which Trumbull performed by appointment, we shall hardly learn the full trust and confidence which was reposed in him unless brief mention is made of one appointment by the General Assembly which, though twice offered him within two years, he declined to accept. This was his appointment as agent at London for Connecticut, and is believed to be the only instance of a public duty which he declined to perform. The first appointment was in March, 1756, at which time his father had been dead less than a year, his mother had reached the age of seventy-three, and his oldest son was but nineteen years of age. In his letter declining the appointment, he says:

“I have carefully weighed the matter, and acknowledge my obligations in gratitude to serve my country in whatever lies in my power, considering every relative duty; and as nothing but a sense of such obligation to duty would be any inducement for me to undertake that important and arduous trust, so a sense of my own insufficiency for that service pleads my excuse; and when I consider the duties I owe to my aged mother, whose dependence is greatly upon me, and all the circumstances of the case, I think I may conclude that I am not negligent or undutiful when I decline the

service, and desire the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Assembly to turn their thoughts on some other person."

Upon his second appointment, in May, 1758, he declines in the following words:

"On serious and mature consideration — that I have not had the small pox — that my peculiar bodily difficulties render my taking it especially dangerous, and that it is at all times frequent in London — the circumstances of my family — I think it fit and reasonable not to accept and undertake the important Trust of an Agent for this Colony at the Court of Great Britain, unto which, at this time, you have done me the honor of an appointment. With a grateful sense of this further expression of your confidence, which I hope never to forfeit, and an humble reliance on your Candor and excuse, I shall ever pray for the Blessing and Direction of the Almighty and all-wise God in your Counsels."

Jared Ingersoll, of whom we hear further in Stamp Act times, was appointed in his stead, and there is no doubt that Governor Fitch, who had some years before declined a similar appointment, understood and appreciated Trumbull's motives and reasons for declining much better than we, from a twentieth century point of view, can understand them.

Trumbull's father died on June 16, 1755, at the age of seventy-seven. For some time previous to his death he appears to have retired from mercantile business, having probably disposed of his vested interest in the business to his son, who appears to

have been successful to such an extent that, eighteen years before his father's death, we find him conveying to his father-in-law land in Lebanon to the value of £1500. This was in 1737; and in 1741 he appears in business transactions as "Jonathan Trumble, trader."

At the death of his father he inherited, subject to his mother's life interest, the family homestead, a lot of land on "Hog Plain", and twenty-two acres "in the rear of Dr. Williams' land", together with the personal property remaining after one third had been given to his mother. The value of this personal property which fell to his share was £924.13.6 old tenor, or £771.1.2 "lawful money", which will give us some idea of the values of the day. In addition to this property, he also inherited under his father's will a share in a mill on Pease's Brook.

In 1756 the family had reached its maximum, and consisted of Trumbull, his wife and aged mother; the eldest son Joseph, who graduated from Harvard College in that year; his brother Jonathan, a sophomore in the same college; his sister Faith, a girl of thirteen; Mary, a girl of eleven; David, a boy of four, and John, a baby born in June of that year.

It is interesting to note that under the system of registration according to social rank which still prevailed at Harvard, the sons far outstripped the father, who, as we have seen, stood very near the bottom of the list in 1727. Less than thirty years gave the son Joseph the rank of second in 1756;



and two years later, the son Jonathan had attained the giddy social height of first in his class. How far this promotion of the sons above the father was a recognition of his own attainments and public position since his graduation it is impossible to say. It is, however, natural to suppose that Harvard watched the progress of her small family of sons quite closely at this time, and stood ready to grant to Trumbull's sons the fickle smiles of social honor which had been denied to the father who thirty years before had probably been regarded as a country bumpkin from a little Connecticut town.

The son David was not to share in the honors which Harvard had to bestow some ten years later, as his father was unable to send him, but he was, no doubt, fully prepared for the college course at Nathan Tisdale's excellent school. When he had reached this age, the family fortunes were at their lowest ebb, and bankruptcy was staring his father grimly in the face, so that the lad David must needs put his young hands to the plow or the pen, and become, as he long continued to be, his father's right-hand man.

This school of Master Nathan Tisdale's of Lebanon was one which the father had been active in founding in 1743, and had gained a reputation second to none in New England, "unless", as Colonel John Trumbull remarks, "that of Master Moody in Newburyport, might, in the judgment of some, have the precedence."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Colonel John Trumbull's "Autobiography, Reminiscences and Letters."

The Indian school founded in Lebanon by the Reverend Eleazer Wheelock was in these days an institution in which Trumbull was interested, as we learn from his correspondence, and from the fact that in 1763 he was placed by the General Assembly on a committee authorized to draw on the Treasurer for the support of this school. Samson Occum, as is well known, was the most striking figure in the early history and the development of the school, which, through the aid and support of the Earl of Dartmouth, at last became Dartmouth College in New Hampshire.

Another Lebanon enterprise which engaged Trumbull's attention at this time was the establishing of a "Fair and Markett to be put up and kept in the Town, at proper Times, with y<sup>e</sup> Privileges and under such convenient and suitable Regulations agreeable thereto." <sup>1</sup> For this purpose he was appointed by vote of a town meeting of Lebanon to apply to the General Assembly in 1763.

Among his papers a draft of a bill which he presumably introduced for this purpose is to be found, but the records are silent regarding legislative action in the matter, so that we must take Trumbull's biographer as our authority for the statement, supported probably by tradition, that such fairs and markets were established through his intervention, to the no small benefit of the town. It seems quite probable that no legislation was found to be needed, and that nothing in the laws of the

<sup>1</sup> Copy of vote attested by William Williams, Town Clerk. In ms. collections of the Conn. Historical Society.

colony at the time prevented the town from undertaking this enterprise without special legislation.

That Trumbull's interest in his native town was most active at all times appears from various sources. In the early days of his public life he was one of the selectmen, and in later days we find him frequently called upon to exercise his functions as magistrate in various matters, such as licensing a house to be used for the purpose of inoculating a number of persons at a time, by the methods of the day for the prevention of smallpox. His sons, too, were active in the local affairs of Lebanon, and held various offices, David especially having been a "lister", constable and surveyor of highways.

## CHAPTER VII

MERCANTILE AFFAIRS — SON JOSEPH IN LONDON —  
DIFFICULTIES THERE — NEW FIRM — CONTINUED  
DIFFICULTIES — MERCANTILE FAILURE

**I**N 1760 Trumbull had reached the age of fifty, having occupied for many years the positions of Assistant in the General Assembly, Judge of the County Court, and Judge of Probate. His home interests had, as we have seen, grown on his hands, the mercantile business in which he was engaged having expanded both in home and foreign commerce. In Boston particularly we find him dealing with the firms of Bowdoin, Pitts and Flucker, Benjamin Dolbeare, Henry Johnson, Green and Walker and others, all of whom reposed such confidence in him that they left the affairs of an insolvent debtor in Lebanon in his hands for settlement on their account unreservedly, at an earlier date. In London, his dealings with Samuel Sparrow had been large; but at the time we are now considering his principal London connection was with the firm of Booth and Lane. His connections with Ireland, the West Indies and other points were also worth mentioning.

His first regularly established firm bore the name of Williams, Trumble and Pitkin, beginning about the year 1750 and continuing under this style for nearly fifteen years, after which a new partnership was formed under the name of Trumble, Fitch and

Trumble, the two junior members being Eleazer Fitch and Trumbull's eldest son, Joseph, who was, at the time of forming this new firm, in London attempting to promote his father's business enterprises. This firm appears to have continued, to struggle against obstacles and difficulties during the short period of its existence which ended in 1767.

As early as in 1762, we find Trumbull's Boston creditors pressing for the payment of money due on book account and other obligations, which it seemed impossible for him to meet at the time, owing to his large holdings of real estate, and the large amounts due him from various sources which he was unable to collect. Among his correspondence, too, we find many begging letters from his unfortunate friends and acquaintances and many acknowledgments of favors which he appears to have granted in response to their appeals. Financially the times were out of joint, for it was a time of contraction of the currency, — if it could be called a currency; a transformation from old tenor values of about sixty shillings to the ounce of silver to new tenor values of about eight shillings. Under the system, or more properly custom, of long credits of the time, much of the money due Trumbull was doubtless in old tenor, and much that he owed was in new tenor. Thus, no doubt, the value of property,<sup>1</sup> owned by him in the heyday of his prosperity is not overstated by his biographer Stuart, if it be possible to reach such a thing as accurate values in such times of variation and fluctuation.

<sup>1</sup> £18,000. Stuart's "Life of Jonathan Trumbull", p. 73.

During the war, in 1761, he had entered into some large contracts for supplying the troops of Connecticut with clothing and provisions. In this undertaking he associated with himself Hezekiah Huntington of Norwich, John Ledyard of Hartford, Eleazer Fitch of Windham, who afterwards became Trumbull's partner, and William Williams of Lebanon, who afterwards became his son-in-law.

Owing to the state of trade at home and abroad, and the difficulties in foreign exchanges, the profits of the transaction proved to be small, especially when divided among the five sharers.

The peace of Paris in 1763 brought hopes of a renewal of prosperity to the American colonists; a renewal sadly needed after the almost continual strain and drain of war for nearly twenty years. Early in this year, taking advantage of these promising conditions, the oldest son, Joseph, was sent to London for the purpose of extending the business of the firm in the Mother Country. This was a notable event in the history of the business in which his father was engaged, and, of course, a notable event in the personal history of this son, now twenty-six years old. After his arrival in London his correspondence with his father was quite voluminous, and being addressed personally, leaves the inference that just at this time the father was transacting business on his sole account, and that the firm of Williams, Trumble and Pitkin had been dissolved. At all events, as early as in November, 1763, Joseph makes mention of his father's proposed partnership with "Colonel [Eleazer] Fitch."

Young Trumbull's business mission to England was beset with many difficulties, the principal of which appears to have been the refusal of the old correspondents of the house to grant further credit for goods to be bought by the son. We soon find him writing to his father urging him to borrow money at home for remittance to London. There appears to have been a contract of some kind at Marblehead, Massachusetts, for the shipment to London of goods of considerable value, which would assist materially in establishing the credit of Trumbull in that city, but on January 10, 1764, young Trumbull writes regarding this to his father:

"I received a letter from my Bro. giving me the disagreeable news of the Failure of the Contract at Marblehead which has entirely destroyed all my Schemes and Prospects of sending you any Goods this spring. Mess<sup>rs</sup> Booth & Lane have refus'd to furnish me with any Goods, & alledge for Reason that as their Partnership is almost out they are determined to bring their Affairs and Connections into as close a Compass as possible.

" . . . This I look on only as an excuse to put me off, as I know they have engaged with Mr. Russell largely."

Going on to speak of the impossibility of arranging a credit with any other house on account of the failure of the Marblehead contract, he adds:

"By the foregoing you will see that I must be in a very uneasy situation here — a Young Man in character of a Merchant in company with many of my countrymen all shipping goods, and not able

to do anything but look on, an idle Spectator, and like by and by to return home and have it said, he has been to England to make acquaintances and connections, but was in so bad credit no one would make any engagements with him."

"My Bro. says in his letter that you are determined to collect your old Debts &c. — Indeed I think it high time for us to take care of ourselves rather than our Friends, by whom it seems we are brought to a very low ebb."

This is, indeed, a rather pathetic situation for a young man going to London in 1763 with high hopes of success in establishing new and profitable business. There is no doubt, too, from what he writes, that colonial merchants without cash in hand were, at this time, usually accorded a cold reception by British merchants, who viewed the financial and political situation and business customs of the colonists with much suspicion. But the young Lebanon merchant did not relax his efforts. He had, certainly, a good friend and counsellor in Richard Jackson, resident agent for Connecticut in England. And Joseph, too, though sadly harassed by the difficulties which he encountered, persistently kept up his efforts and manfully struggled on, until we find him, a month after the letter just quoted, writing that he had made some arrangements at Bristol with Stephen Apthorp for goods. He engages, too, with Edward Dixon of St. Kitts, to build in Connecticut a sloop of sixty tons for the West India trade, of which sloop Dixon is to own one third. A snow is also to be built for the Irish



trade, and by means of these and other vessels and the trade in which they are to engage, funds will be provided to meet obligations in London. Then, too, the Governor of Grenada, West Indies, makes young Trumbull's acquaintance, and a project is formed for framing and collecting materials for a government hospital at that island.<sup>1</sup>

All through this time, the proceedings of Parliament were carefully watched and reported to his father by the young merchant; for on these proceedings depended much of the mercantile interest of the colonies. Nor did he fail to see the sights of London and its vicinity, including the king and queen. Among other things, he busied himself at the herald's office, where his researches led him to adopt the present spelling of his surname, which was also adopted by his father soon after the son's return.

In the fall of 1764, the son returns, having been absent for about a year, and having, in the face of many difficulties, succeeded in purchasing goods from Champion and Haley to the value of about £1200 on nine months' credit, and of Stephen Apthorp to the value of about £1000, on six months' credit, besides which arrangements had been made for other business both in Ireland and England, the West Indies and elsewhere.

On his return he took up his abode in Norwich, where, no doubt, he superintended the building and

<sup>1</sup>On May 25, 1764, he writes: "The disappointment I have met with from Mr. Lane has not discouraged or disheartened me, but rather served to encourage me, and at the same time make me cautious."

fitting out of the sloop in which Edward Dixon of St. Kitts was to have an interest, and the building of the snow for the Irish trade.

Within two years from the time of Joseph Trumbull's return, matters have an ominous look in the business of Trumbull, Fitch and Trumbull. The Stamp Act disturbances of 1765 had, of course, unsettled business in the colonies. Collections, especially of such debts as were due the firm and its individual members, were difficult, and in many cases impossible. It appears that in 1766 the firm was in liquidation, if not regularly dissolved, for on October 6th of that year we find young Jonathan Trumbull writing to his father that trouble is brewing in Boston, and urging settlement of his father's partnership accounts and "vigorous collection of debts due."

It must have been at this time that the business of Trumbull began to take on an appearance of hopeless failure. He appears to have been a large landholder in Lebanon, Torrington and elsewhere, but at this time land was with difficulty convertible into ready money; and in less than a year a public or private sale of the Trumbull real estate for the benefit of his creditors was seriously discussed.

There may be slight authority for taking the dramatic view of this failure which has been taken, and for making the case a parallel, to some extent, with Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." True it is that Trumbull's son John, in his autobiography written at the age of eighty-four, says:

"About this time, when I was nine or ten years

old, my father's mercantile failure took place. . . . In one season, almost every vessel, and all the property he had upon the ocean, was swept away, and he was a poor man at so late a period in his life, as left no hope of retrieving his affairs."

This was an old man's recollection of a boy's impression of the family disaster, and hardly seems borne out by the facts. In the first place we find that Trumbull was always careful to effect marine insurance, even on small coastwise shipments from Boston to Norwich. In his letters to his London creditors he mentions the loss of but one vessel, which partly owing to the bankruptcy of one of the insurers resulted in a loss of £630 over and above the marine insurance effected. The fact remains that his attempts to meet the claims of his London creditors by shipments, freights and the sale of vessels resulted badly. He appears to have been willing to meet a loss on these transactions, as we learn by the following letter, written probably to Lane, Booth & Frazier on the 1st of July, 1768.

"In order [to promote trade] laid out for building a small Ship of about 160 Tons to lade Freight to Ireland with Flaxseed, here or in England to sell the Ship, and make remittance of the value of the Ship, her cargo and freight, and hoped to do it without much loss, but to my astonishment it turned out extream bad."

After speaking of the loss of the vessel just referred to, he adds that his whaling business had also resulted in considerable loss.

In this same year, 1768, the son Joseph, who was

also left penniless by this failure, again goes to London for the sorry task of adjusting as best he may the affairs of the firm with its creditors. It seems quite certain that they were satisfied that every effort would be made to meet their claims. The father had already submitted to these creditors a full and frank statement of his affairs and schedule of his resources, even to the books in his library and his salary as Deputy Governor, and had conveyed to them without any request on their part such amounts and values as he believed would eventually satisfy their claims.

The best evidence of the confidence which these and other creditors felt in his integrity is in the fact that they refrained from pressing their claims in court, and remained satisfied with such conveyances of property as their debtor could equitably make. No record can be found of any legal proceedings against him, and for years afterwards he struggled to retrieve his fortunes, but without success. Meantime he retained his positions in public life, as Chief Justice of the Superior Court and Judge of Probate until his election as Governor in 1769, advancing in 1766 from the position of Assistant to that of Deputy Governor.

From the time of his failure to the close of his life, we must remember to look upon him as a man in reduced financial circumstances, with only his personal worth to recommend him for the high public positions to which he was called.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE STAMP ACT — LETTERS OF JOSEPH TRUMBULL FROM LONDON — CONNECTICUT'S OPPOSITION TO THE ACT — INGERSOLL COMPELLED TO RESIGN — STAMP ACT CONGRESS — GOVERNOR FITCH TAKES THE OATH — TRUMBULL AND OTHERS REFUSE TO WITNESS THE CEREMONY — TRUMBULL ELECTED DEPUTY GOVERNOR — PITKIN SUCCEEDS FITCH AS GOVERNOR

**A**T the time when the son Joseph made his first visit to London, the policy of the Mother Country towards the American colonies had begun to assume the greatest importance. In Massachusetts Trumbull's Harvard classmate, Chief Justice Thomas Hutchinson, had granted the odious Writs of Assistance on the application of His Majesty's Collector of Customs, honestly believing, no doubt, that it was his bounden duty. In other colonies, the king had begun to interfere in internal affairs, such as the appointment of chief justices. Prudent little Connecticut appears to have been free from such exactions just at this time, having in 1762 submitted a very humble report to the Lords of Trade and Finance, showing that the resources of the colony were meagre and the population small.

None the less, however, was Connecticut keenly alert, watching with untiring interest the policy of the Mother Country as it applied to other colonies

and threatened to apply to herself. Of all the public men in this colony, few if any were more competent than Trumbull to form clear and intelligent opinions on the weighty political issues of the day. Thirty years in public life had familiarized him with the charter rights of his colony and the policy of the home government, whose established errors in colonial rule were aggravated and increased by the stupid policy of George III, and his sycophants.

Especially during Joseph Trumbull's first visit to London was the condition of affairs in Parliament ominous, and he was an interested listener to the discussions of the day regarding the colonial policy of England, which discussions he faithfully reported to his father. The following extract from his letter of December 10, 1763, will serve as a specimen:

"They talk of taxing the Colonies for the support of the Troops to be kept up in America, and that tax to be laid on the Colonies without any respect to their charter privileges, or rather, in such manner as to sap the foundations of them all. Indeed, our good Friends, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, Lord Sandwich, the Duke of Bedford, Earl of Halifax and some others are of the opinion that all the charters in America should be immediately vacated without ceremony, and that we should be governed entirely by Governors and Councils appointed by the King, and those with stated salaries, to make them independent of the people, and that we should have no Assemblies.

"When it objected that those charters can't be

taken away without a tryal for some breach of those charters, they say they were given in high Times by the King without consent of Parliament, and so are void in themselves.

“They also propose a Superintendent over the whole — and that we shall be prevented making Bar Iron, and several other barbarous impositions are proposed to be laid on us, unless the cruel intentions of those people now in power are by some means prevented.”

Later, under date of March 24, 1764, he writes:

“The internal tax is put off, and I hope the Colony’s will make such objections that it may never be laid on except with our consent — The thing aimed at is not so much the money to be raised by the Stamp Duty as a precedent for Future Times. Was we to give up this point, I dare to undertake that in four years’ Time we should be governed by King’s Governors and Councils without a House of Representatives in all America. They may take away all our charters by the same Rule they Tax us.”

These and other similar communications are frequently to be found among the letters which the son wrote to the father in these exciting times. The putting off of the legislation in Parliament regarding the taxation of the American colonies was, as we know, only for a short time — long enough, however, for opinion to crystallize in the colonies through the discussions which the news from England continually incited. In Connecticut we have the old tradition of the secret debate on

the Stamp Act in the General Assembly, and the public issue of the pamphlet entitled "Reasons why the British colonies in America should not be charged with Internal Taxes by Authority of Parliament; humbly offered for consideration in behalf of the Colony of Connecticut." This pamphlet, officially adopted by the General Assembly, was presented by Jared Ingersoll, the colony's agent, to Lord Grenville, who praised the tone in which it was written, but declined to concede the force of its arguments.

For reasons which it is hardly to our purpose to discuss in this connection, the Stamp Act passed the House of Commons and became a law on March 22, 1765; but through the influence of Ingersoll its enforcement in the colonies was postponed until the following November. It was impossible for Benjamin Franklin, as it was impossible for the British people, to believe that the enforcement of the Act would be resisted by the colonists. Jared Ingersoll shared in this belief, and accepted, on Franklin's advice, the office of stamp distributor for Connecticut; an office which, on his arrival in the following September, he was compelled to resign at the demand of about five hundred Sons of Liberty armed with peeled staves, at Wethersfield.

In this same eventful month of September, Connecticut, at a special session of the General Assembly, appoints her delegates to the Stamp Act Congress to be held in New York. Among the delegates at first appointed, the name of Jonathan Trumbull appears; but for some reason he did not serve on



this commission, and Eliphalet Dyer attended in his stead, with the two other commissioners, hampered to quite an extent by the restrictions which the General Assembly had laid upon them, yet doing good service in framing petitions to the king and to Parliament. In this same September, too, the Reverend Stephen Johnson of Lyme begins his anonymous publications in the *New London Gazette*, eloquently and forcefully urging resistance to the Stamp Act.

By these and other influences the people of Connecticut, like those of other colonies, became unanimous in the opinion that the Stamp Act was subversive of the rights of the colonists. Especially in Connecticut was this true, for a cherished principle here had long been that no internal taxes should be levied except by a legislative assembly in which the colony should be duly represented. Unanimous though the people were in this opinion, they were still divided into two parties, of which one believed that their duty as loyal subjects to the King of England compelled them to obey any laws, however odious, which might be enacted by the king's Parliament; while the other party believed that the rights of the colonists were such that they were not bound to obey any laws of the Mother Country which were subversive of those rights.

The one party was led by Thomas Fitch, then Governor of the colony, a man well versed in law, careful of the rights of his colony, but believing that the rights of his king were superior, and that his mandates, whatever they might be, should be

obeyed. No outspoken opponent of Governor Fitch can be found who more nearly matched him in acquirements and ability than Jonathan Trumbull who made no secret of his belief that no mandate of the king should be obeyed which deprived the colonists of their rights as British subjects. In the following November the inevitable clash of these two parties occurred in the Governor's Council, of which Trumbull was, as he had been for many years, a member. A clause in the Stamp Act, which was to take effect in this month, made it obligatory upon every governor of the American colonies to take an oath to cause "all and every of the clauses [of the Act] to be punctually and *bona-fide* observed." This oath Governor Fitch requested his Council to administer to him at a meeting called for that purpose.

There is no doubt, from such fragmentary reports as we get of this memorable meeting of the Governor's Council, that a long and a last heated debate ensued. It appears from a printed statement of Governor Fitch, in which he vindicates his own course, that the Council thought it advisable for him to offer to take the oath; but it is evident, although he does not say so, that when he acted on this suggestion, a majority of the Council refused to have anything to do with such a proceeding. Four members, however, were willing to take part in the ceremony, and as three were sufficient for the purpose, Governor Fitch called upon them to administer the oath.

He had argued that the fine of one thousand

pounds which would, by the Act, be imposed upon any governor who did not take the oath would apply equally to each and every member of the Council who refused to administer it.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the Council, to the number of seven, remained firm in their opposition to the course of the Governor. The outspoken protests of Trumbull and Dyer were, it is said, particularly indignant, but all to no purpose. The oath was about to be administered, and the time had arrived when actions must "speak louder than words." In this belief the seven protesting members — Trumbull, as Stuart tells us, at their head — indignantly withdrew from the council chamber, refusing to witness the hateful ceremony.

The taking of the oath to administer the Stamp Act was fatal to the political career of Thomas Fitch. After the next election he retired from public life, and William Pitkin was elected governor in his stead. Fitch, an able, intelligent and sincere man, carried with him quite a following, and appeared as a candidate for governor on several subsequent elections, as a supporter of the king. But popular sentiment was too strongly opposed to his views, and he passed into history enrolled among Sabine's "Loyalists of the American Revolution."

With the election of William Pitkin as Governor came the election of Jonathan Trumbull as Deputy Governor. The four members of Governor Fitch's

<sup>1</sup> Fitch's pamphlet, entitled "Some reasons which influenced the Governor to take and the Councillors to administer the oath."

Council who had administered the Stamp Act oath were, with him, relegated to private life, and men of the opposing party were chosen in their places. Trumbull was soon placed on a committee to assist the Governor in preparing "an humble, dutiful and loyal Address to his Majesty expressive of the filial duty, gratitude and satisfaction of the Governor and Company of this colony on the happy occasion of the beneficial repeal of the late American Stamp Act." A general thanksgiving was appointed, and the prospect, for the moment, seemed bright. The Declaratory Act, however, coupled with the repeal of the Stamp Act, asserted England's right to tax the American colonies, and hung ominously over them, even in these days of general rejoicing.

## CHAPTER IX

TRUMBULL ELECTED GOVERNOR — THE POLITICAL  
PARTIES IN CONNECTICUT — HIS COURSE REGARDING  
WRITS OF ASSISTANCE — THE CONTEST FOR GOVERN-  
ORSHIP — CAMPAIGN LITERATURE

THE exciting and interesting times which we have now reached find Trumbull personally at the lowest ebb of his mercantile career and politically nearing the floodtide of his advancement in public life. There is no doubt that even an honorable and unavoidable mercantile failure, such as he experienced in the second year of his deputy governorship, was, in his day, more nearly fatal to political advancement than it might be in our day. Yet in 1768, the year after his failure, he retained his office of deputy governor by popular vote, although in the following year he failed to obtain a majority of the votes of the freeman, and was reëlected by vote of the General Assembly, which body also elected him governor, in October of this same year, to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Governor Pitkin. Again, in 1770, his reëlection as governor was by the General Assembly, as he again failed of "a majority of the votes of the people."<sup>1</sup> From this time forward, however, his opponents appear to have given up the contest, and for ten years after-

<sup>1</sup> *Connecticut Courant*.

wards his election by the people was, in most instances, as good as unanimous.

There is no doubt that during the last year of his deputy-governorship and the first two years of his governorship, party lines were quite firmly drawn, and his opponents used every means in their power to defeat him. The indications are that the two parties previously referred to were at this time quite evenly divided, and that Trumbull's pronounced views of opposition to the oppressive measures of the home government were coupled with his unfortunate financial condition by his opponents in a way to prejudice voters against him. In 1768 application had been made to him as Chief Justice by His Majesty's Collector of Customs, Duncan Stewart, for Writs of Assistance, authorizing the king's officers of the customs indiscriminately to search private houses for smuggled goods and for other evidences of violation of the navigation laws, and to compel any person upon whom they might call to assist them in such search. Eight years before this time, Thomas Hutchinson, as we have seen, had granted such writs in Massachusetts against the eloquent appeals of James Otis and against the expressed sentiment and will of the people.

It is, perhaps, enough to say that, owing to the stand taken by Trumbull as Chief Justice at this time and subsequently, such writs were never granted in Connecticut. The first application for these writs was, no doubt, an attempt on the part of the applicants to test the position of Chief Justice

Trumbull on the subject. The court record of this case closes with the following decision, if it may be so called:

“And no information being made by said Petitioners, or otherwise, of any special occasion, for said Writ — this Court is of opinion that it is needful to consider on the purport of said Act [of Parliament], and the manner and form of granting such Writs of Assistance, according to the usages of his Majesty’s Court of Exchequer: Therefore this Court will further consider and advise thereon.”

And thus the matter rested for more than a year, during which time Trumbull wrote at some length on the subject to Richard Jackson, the agent of Connecticut at London, and to William Samuel Johnson, who was in London as a special agent and attorney in the then celebrated Mohegan case. Johnson writes in September, 1769:

“I own *I was surprised* to find such a Writ in use in a country so jealous of its liberties, but it seems it now has custom on its side, and issues quite of course. I find it has also been adopted in Massachusetts Bay and some other Provinces, and is said to be grounded on this principle — that the presence of the Civil Officer is necessary for the preservation of Peace, as well as to give a proper Countenance to the Officers of the Revenue.”

During the previous April, it seems that Collector Stewart, after waiting for thirteen months for results of the further consideration and advice which the Court purposed to take regarding his previous petition, again applies, more specifically than be-

fore, for Writs of Assistance, citing a case in which such a writ was needed. Again Chief Justice Trumbull replies that "the Court will be further advised", and that he will lay the case before the General Assembly which was soon to convene. This body met a full statement of the matter in its usual conservative and cautious manner, replying through a committee "that the Assembly could take no notice of it, that it belonged to the Superior Court, and that as individuals, not as members of the Assembly, they advised the Court not to grant such Warrants, which seemed to be the universal opinion", as appears from a letter written by Trumbull to William Samuel Johnson, June 14, 1769. He also writes as follows to Johnson in the same letter, referring to an application from the king's attorney for his decision, which he does not intend to give until the next term of the court:

"I have taken care to find what the Courts in the other Colonies have done, and find no such Writs have been given by any of the Courts except in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, where they are given as soon as asked for. I believe the Courts in all the other Colonies will be as well united, and as firm in this Matter, as in anything that has yet happened between us and Great Britain.

"I have never yet seen any Act of Parliament authorizing the Court of Exchequer in giving such Writs as they give, but conceive they have crept into use by the inattention of the people, and the bad practices of designing men. We are directed to give such Writs as the Court of Exchequer are



enabled by Act of Parliament to give, which are very different, as I conceive, from such Writs as they do give. Our Court will, on all occasions of Complaint, grant such Warrants as may be necessary for promoting his Majesty's service, and at the same time consistent with the liberty and privilege of the subject, and made returnable to the Court; but further than that we dare not go, and they must not expect we shall. I give you my mind on this subject, as I expect representation will be made of the conduct of the Court herein, and it may not be amiss to have you prepared on the occasion."

The letter closes with Trumbull's view of the failure to intimidate the colonies by sending troops to awe them into submission, and with the following significant words:

"Notwithstanding the ill-judged burthens heaped upon us by a weak and wicked Administration, we still retain a degree of regard, and even fondness for Great Britain, and a firm attachment to his Majesty's person, family, and government, and on just and equal terms, as children, not as slaves, should rejoice to remain united with them to the latest time. But to think of being slaves—we who so well know the bitterness of it by the instances so continually before our eyes, cannot bear the shocking thought—Nature starts back at the idea!"

Johnson having, as we have seen, already informed Trumbull of the readiness with which Writs of Assistance were granted in England and the

legal status of such writs, replies under date of October 16, 1769, to the above letter, making mention of the course of Trumbull:

“The intelligence you have favored me with of the steps which have been taken relative to writs of assistance, is very obliging as well as useful to the purpose you mention. It gives me pleasure to find that it is so probable that the courts of the other Colonies will be agreed with you on this important point. Union in this, as in everything else, is of the last importance. If an united stand is made upon this occasion, I think it extremely probable that the capital point will be carried without much difficulty; and it will be a very great satisfaction, and not a little redound to their honor, that the Superior Court of Connecticut have taken the lead in a matter of so much consequence to the liberty, the property, and the security of the subject.”

Thus did one of the most learned and scholarly of the sons of Connecticut support and commend the course of Trumbull in this matter. No record can be found of any further reply to the application of the King's Attorney, a reply which it may not have been prudent, at the time, to place on the records of the Court. The attitude of the Chief Justice in the matter is plainly shown in his correspondence with Johnson.

But there were others — Trumbull's political opponents — who viewed this and similar matters differently, and who persuaded themselves and tried to persuade others that such men as Trumbull, Johnson and all others who were unwilling to

submit to the measures and requirements of the home government were little, if any, better than anarchists. After the death of Governor Pitkin in October, 1769, and the appointment of Trumbull by the General Assembly to fill his unexpired term, there is no doubt that an active canvass for the next election of a governor ensued, and that ex-Governor Fitch, or his friends, or both, used all the political methods of the day to secure his reelection by the people. There is no doubt that these methods included full discussions in the country store, field and fireside, of the merits of the two candidates Trumbull and Fitch, in which the course of the former in refusing to witness the taking of the Stamp Act oath, in refusing to issue Writs of Assistance, and in denouncing the policy of the home government were severely criticized by the conservatives. Even the poet of the day discussed the situation in verse, and has left us as a result a ballad which is numbered among the curiosities of American literature. It discloses the fact that Trumbull's mercantile failure figured, as has been intimated, among the obstacles in the way of his political advancement. The ballad consists of ten verses, each followed by a chorus applying particularly to the governor to whom it refers. The verses relating to Governors Fitch and Pitkin, and to the coming election, apply particularly to the situation at the time, although the ballad refers to the various governors under the charter, with the exception of Governor William Leete. In the following verses "Pitch" means Governor Fitch,

whose pseudonym is intended to conform to the nautical cast of the ballad; "Will" means Governor Pitkin, and "his Purser", Jonathan Trumbull, the opposing candidate. The "Gunners" doubtless mean such men as Israel Putnam, John Durkee, and other Sons of Liberty, and the "midshippers" are their followers.

"Old Captain Pitch commanded next, —  
A skillful navigator,  
And as good a seaman as ever turned  
His hardy face to weather.  
When a mutiny on board the Ship,  
Fomented by Chaplain and Gunner,  
Drove Captain Pitch from the quarter-deck,  
And the Ship was most undone, Sir.

"CHORUS — Now this is what I will maintain,  
Let who will it gainsay, Sir, —  
Whene'er the Crew has mutinied  
The Chaplain has been in the fray, Sir.

"Our old friend Will next took the Helm,  
Who'd cruised for many years, Sir,  
And steer'd as well, when the weather was calm,  
As any Tar on board, Sir.  
His friendly art succeeded now  
To accomplish every measure,  
By a 'How do you do,' with a decent Bow,  
And a shaking of hands forever.

"CHORUS — Now this is what I will maintain  
As the judgment of one Freeman,  
That his bowing his head and shaking of hands  
Was done to please the Seaman.

"Now Will is dead, and his Purser broke,  
I know not who'll come next, Sir;

The Seamen call for old Pitch again, —  
Affairs are sore perplexed, Sir.  
But the Gunners and some midshippers  
Are making an insurrection,  
And would rather the ship should founder quite ,  
Than be saved by Pitch's inspection.

“CHORUS — But this is what I will maintain,  
In spite of Gunners and all, Sir, —  
If Pitch can save the Ship once more,  
'Tis best he overhaul her!  
Amen.”

The entire ballad bears the title:  
“Observations on the several commanders of the  
Ship Connecticut. Oct. 10, 1769. by an old decrepid  
Seaman who laments the Ship's misfortune.

“To the tune of ‘The Vicar of Bray’.  
“‘Sic transit Gloria Mundi’.”

This ballad, like some other campaign literature, was probably circulated in manuscript. As an indication of the interest which the candidate felt in it, a copy was found, long after his death, among the “Trumbull Papers” which are now in possession of the Connecticut Historical Society.

Unfortunately for our purpose, the political contests of the time made no showing in the public press, and we are only informed by the *Connecticut Courant*, that Trumbull, at the election in May, 1770, did not receive a majority of the votes of the people, while the records of the General Assembly contain only the bare statement that he was elected by the vote of that body, although all the other

candidates, for whose offices there was probably less of a contest, were elected by popular vote.

· And thus Governor Fitch passes from sight in public life, and Governor Trumbull assumes the position which Fitch reluctantly relinquished.

## CHAPTER X

DEATH OF TRUMBULL'S MOTHER — THE MOHEGAN CASE — SUSQUEHANNA CASE — EMBASSY OF WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON — HIS CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE GOVERNORS OF CONNECTICUT — JOHNSON'S ACTION IN THE SUSQUEHANNA CASE IN LONDON — TRUMBULL'S SHARE IN THIS CASE

IT should be noted that on November 8, 1768, Trumbull's mother died at the advanced age of eighty-five, leaving him, at the age of fifty-eight, with a new generation of sons and daughters about him. With his election to the governorship, his other public offices ceased, and such personal business as he was engaged in was gradually relinquished, until, in a few years, it was entirely given up.

The beginning of Governor Trumbull's term of office finds the colony of Connecticut with two important and intricate lawsuits on her hands. These were the Mohegan case and the Susquehanna case, the responsibilities of which fell at once upon the chief executive of the colony. His position on the Governor's Council for many years, and his appointment on committees in connection with both these cases, had familiarized him with their merits, and prepared him for the more active part which he was now to take in their prosecution. Far more important, however, was the general attitude of

Great Britain towards her American colonies at this time, and the policy to be pursued by the unique little colony of Connecticut to preserve her liberal charter rights and the rights of her people as free-born Englishmen. In all these matters, correspondence and documents have been preserved which show, quite plainly, Trumbull's various sources of information and the opportunities he enjoyed for forming a careful and candid opinion not only on the affairs of his colony, but on the affairs of his country as well.

First, regarding the Mohegan case: This was, at the time of his first election as Governor, a case of sixty-five years' standing — six years older than the Governor himself. It had begun in 1704, as the result of a commission appointed by Queen Anne upon the petition of the Mohegan Indians instigated by John Mason, a descendant of the hero of the Pequot War, claiming lands of which they alleged they had been deprived. Joseph Dudley of Massachusetts was at the head of this commission. Connecticut, relying on her charter rights, refused to appear and plead in her own defense, and the case was decided against her, with costs amounting to £573, 12. 8., as it probably would have been in any event. By this decision, the colony was called upon to give up to the Mohegan Indians lands which had been gained by conquest of the Pequots, by purchase, and by conveyance to the colony from the first John Mason. An appeal brought about the appointment of a commission of review in 1706, but Connecticut, finding herself



able under her charter to manage her own Indian affairs, never made use of this commission, and it was not until 1737 that the case ever appeared in court again. Meantime the Mohegans were divided into two factions, one for and one opposed to the claim; and their sachems had made grants of land in all directions, sometimes conveying the same piece of land to several different parties. The Masons, of whom there was now a new generation, went to England and applied for a new commission to determine the claims which the General Assembly of Connecticut had refused to grant them. A commission was appointed by the Crown, and convened at Norwich on June 4, 1738. After a long hearing, in which it is interesting to watch the course of the Colony, a decision was given in its favor. With this decision the Masons, of course, were dissatisfied, again appealed to the Crown, and succeeded in getting the decision set aside and a new commission appointed. This commission met at Norwich in July, 1743, and by a bare majority again decided in favor of Connecticut, on the fifth of the following November. Again the Masons appealed to the Crown, and upon this appeal, it was decided that the case should be tried before "The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council."

This brings us to the year 1766, at which time it was found necessary for Connecticut to send William Samuel Johnson as a special agent to London to assist Richard Jackson, the resident agent of the Colony, in preparing the case for defense. A wiser choice of a special agent could not have been made.

Johnson was well versed in the law, and proved himself an accomplished courtier and diplomatist. For the five years during which he waited in England at great personal sacrifice and inconvenience, for the trial of the case, his services to his country can hardly be overestimated. It was fortunate for Connecticut that the frequent attacks of gout suffered by the Attorney-general, and the constant habit of members of the King's Council of betaking themselves to their country residences during the recesses and vacations of Parliament, when the case was set down for trial, kept Johnson in London waiting from one to another postponement by the King's Council.

The case itself sinks into insignificance when compared with the important news which Johnson was enabled to send to the governors of Connecticut during his long, enforced exile in London. Of these letters Doctor Jeremy Belknap says, before their publication by the Massachusetts Historical Society, "I have read the letters repeatedly with delight, and have gained a better idea of the political system than from all the books published during that period. . . . The publication of them would do him honor, as he appears in them to have been a firm friend to the liberties of his country, and a faithful, vigilant, discerning agent, detesting the artifices, evasions and blunders of the British Court, and giving the best information, advice and caution to his employers."

Now that these letters are in print,<sup>1</sup> Doctor

<sup>1</sup> Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Vol. 9, fifth series.

Belknap's verdict of more than a century ago may well be reaffirmed by the reader of to-day.

It was this mass of active correspondence, among other things, that Trumbull in his positions of Deputy Governor and Governor discussed, and studied in council and in private; and from this and other sources that he gained his knowledge of the mistaken policy of Great Britain towards her American colonies. He heard the other side, too; for in November, 1769, we find his Harvard classmate, Thomas Hutchinson, writing him, after speaking of the loss of the Warwick patent in the destruction of his home:

"I have letters from Sir F. Bernard who was as favorably received as he could wish. . . . The Parliament would not meet till after Xmas. We had not provoked them enough the last of Sept. wholly to lay aside the intention of repealing the Revenue Acts, or part of them. I wish what we have done since may not do it. They desire all the effects of the Merchants' Combination, but resent the contempt and indignity which they carry with them. I am sorry your Assembly have publickly justified them. It is not improbable ours will follow the example.

"I am

"Your most Obed, Humble Serv.<sup>t</sup>

"Tho. Hutchinson."<sup>1</sup>

The monotony of the reports of Johnson regarding the delays and heavy expenses in the Mohegan case is varied, at times, by his reports of the phases

<sup>1</sup> Unpublished Trumbull papers in Massachusetts Historical Society.

which it assumed during his five years of waiting for its trial; and by the important information which Governor Trumbull sent him regarding the right and title of Connecticut to the Indian lands in question. Johnson's alert watchfulness in the matter discovers that Samson Occum, the Indian preacher, had returned to London in the interests of the case, and had held an interview with Lord Hillsborough regarding it in March, 1768. During the pendency of the case in 1769 Johnson learns that the Indians, through the Mason party, had presented a petition to the king regarding it, which irregular proceeding was rumored to have been by the advice of Lord Hillsborough; whereupon Johnson confronts him with this rumor, and is met by his denial of any knowledge of such petition, and his acquiescence in Johnson's opinion that such a proceeding would be unwarrantable. Johnson is also obliged to deny a false accusation on the part of the appellants that the colonial agents had attempted to delay or prevent the trial by bribing attorneys. He also watches Mason, and learns that he went to America for more money and evidence in 1769, but was unsuccessful in the quest of evidence, though his friends furnished him some money. "He has no fresh grounds of hope," Johnson writes, "nor we of fear", the principal grounds of fear at this time being that the prejudice in London against the colonies in general might injure the case for Connecticut. It is at this point that we learn of Johnson's solicitude for the effects of an adverse decision upon the charter rights of the

colony; something far more to be dreaded than the mere success of Mason in establishing his claim. At this point, too, he acknowledges the receipt of Trumbull's statement of the entire case, and praises the just and clear idea which it gives, expressing the hope and belief that Trumbull's visit to the Mohegans by appointment of the General Assembly will have a good effect. Trumbull's scrupulous attention to the case is evidenced by Johnson's acknowledgment of a genealogical draft from his hands, showing the pedigree of the Mohegan sachems, a question which had played an important part in the earlier hearings. Later, too, Trumbull gives in full detail the schemes of one Moses Park to prejudice the case. In short, no detail escapes his attention which may be of any use to Johnson in his defense of the rights of his colony, and all these matters of interest are fully communicated to him, forming the only known sources of information which Johnson received from home in the matter during his long sojourn in England.

The proceedings were varied in 1770 by a motion on the part of Connecticut to dismiss the appeal. At last, on June 12, 1770, the case was opened in Council by the appellants in an address consuming two days, in which the colony and landholders were called tyrants and usurpers, to which false accusations the Council were only too ready to listen. The illness of the Attorney-general, who was to answer for Connecticut, postponed the trial for another full year, until at last we find Johnson writing that the hearing ended on June 11, 1771,

at which time the decision was pending. This decision was at last given practically in favor of Connecticut, at or about the time when Johnson gladly returned to his home.

Thus ended a lawsuit of nearly seventy years' standing, in the course of which Trumbull's share in the defense of his colony forms an important part. He it was who prepared a full statement of the case, and furnished, as we have seen, other important evidence regarding it. A service of inestimable value which he performed in connection with these careful and arduous researches was the preservation of the only portion of the journal of the first John Winthrop then known to exist. At the time of making his investigations this journal was secured by him among papers furnished by the Winthrop family. His knowledge and love of the study of the history of his colony and country led him to be the first to discover the value of this important document. The discovery of the second portion of this journal in the old South Church in Boston in 1816 completed this contemporary history which has proved so valuable to historians. In the same connection, too, Trumbull preserved Lion Gardiner's account of the Pequot War, thus completing the four contemporary accounts of participators in this important event.

One of the many unexpected services which Johnson was able to perform during his stay in London was in connection with the Susquehanna case, which the heirs of William Penn undertook to bring before British tribunals at the time, in

which attempt they were defeated by Johnson's masterly arguments before the Board of Trade, to which the case had been referred.

In February, 1769, the first fight or battle in what is known as the first Pennamite war had taken place in the Wyoming Valley, while Trumbull was still Deputy Governor of Connecticut. At the session of the General Assembly which appointed him Governor, the Susquehanna case had assumed such importance that he was appointed to collect all possible evidence which might show the rights of Connecticut in the premises. As brief a statement as possible of this complicated case will be needed to show us with what he had to deal.

At the Albany Congress of 1754, a company of Connecticut men known as the Susquehanna Company bought from the Iroquois Indians a tract of land in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania for £2000. It was believed by this company that the charter of Connecticut clearly gave that colony jurisdiction over this land, and that the Connecticut custom of buying and paying for it as Indian property would do the rest. King Charles II had first granted the land to Connecticut under her charter in 1662. In 1681, rivalling the Indians in their real estate transactions, he granted the same land to William Penn, leaving the lawyers of a later date to decide whether a royal grant of land which had already been granted to others should legally dispossess the first grantees. In 1762, the Susquehanna Company sent two hundred men into the Wyoming Valley to effect a pioneer settlement under

their Indian deed and the Connecticut charter. The settlers fell victims to what may be called the first Wyoming Massacre, now almost forgotten in the greater horrors of the second, some sixteen years later. Twenty of their number were killed by the Delaware Indians, who surprised and overpowered them, wiping out this first settlement.

In 1769, with true Connecticut grit and persistence, a new settlement was begun on the site of the old one, and with it began the Pennamite wars, so called. From this time on, for two or three years, the first of these "wars" raged with varying fortunes, under Colonel Zebulon Butler as the leader for the Connecticut settlers, and Captain Amos Ogden for the Penns. Four times was the settlement of the Susquehanna Company wiped out, and four times settlers returned to the conflict, which was carried on even after the battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill had been fought, when, at Governor Trumbull's earnest request, the legal proceedings were postponed for the sake of harmony among the colonies, leaving the Connecticut settlers still in possession of the valley, only to fall victims to the terrible Wyoming Massacre of 1778, and once more to return and rebuild their settlement.

The final verdict regarding the claim of Connecticut to the Wyoming Valley was at last reached by a commission appointed by the Continental Congress of 1782, and the decision was adverse to that plucky and pertinacious little State which for twenty years had so bravely maintained her foothold in the beautiful valley which at last she lost, but on which



the influence she stamped had a vital effect in the days of the Revolution, and even down to the present day. Far more important, however, was a grant made to Connecticut as a tacit compensation for her loss of Wyoming, being a tract in what was then the wilderness of Ohio, larger than the land she could still call her own. Here, in the Western Reserve, was the basis of her permanent school fund, and here she sent her sons to transplant her sterling qualities in the new country, now growing old, which is still so largely peopled by men of Connecticut ancestry.

Early in his first term of office Governor Trumbull was appointed with Colonel George Wyllys as "a committee to make diligent search after all deeds of conveyance relative to the title of the lands granted by the Crown to this Colony by the royal charter", and if not found in America, "write to the Agent of the Colony in Great Britain to make diligent search for the aforesaid deeds, and also the grant to the Duke of York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, and in general all other grants that can affect us . . . "

It is hardly necessary to read between the lines in this resolve to discover that the then opening Pennamite war had something — perhaps everything — to do with it. We have seen that Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts reported at about this time to Trumbull, doubtless in reply to an inquiry, that the original Warwick patent was lost in the destruction of his home. Trumbull then writes to Johnson in London, stating that the action of the

General Assembly was "occasioned partly by the Susquehanna Purchase", and asking for the documents in question, also for an investigation of the legacy of Governor Hopkins of £2000 for educational purposes, and Colonel Fenwick's legacy of £500 for public uses.

Careful search was made by Johnson for the papers in question, but he was only successful in finding a part of them. His advice, given at length, with reasons and arguments, was to the effect that Connecticut as a colony should refrain from pressing her claim to the Wyoming Valley, and should insist that the controversy then pending should be confined strictly to the Susquehanna Company and the colony of Pennsylvania, or, if possible, the heirs of William Penn in whom the title to the land rested. Johnson's solicitude for the safety of the Connecticut charter led him to this view; for his observations in London showed him the temper of the governing powers towards the most liberal of all the colonial charters, and led him to believe, no doubt quite rightly, that this was no time for the assertion of such rights as Connecticut possessed under that charter. On the other hand, the Penn party, who were then represented in London, lost no opportunity for urging a hearing of the case as between the two colonies, and went so far as to sell a considerable portion of the land in the Wyoming Valley to Pennsylvanians in order to give more of a colonial color to the case. The agents of the Penns at last succeeded in bringing the case to a hearing before the Board of Trade, in which Johnson succeeded,

as has been said, in showing that it was an issue between a corporation and the claimants of proprietorship in the land, and as such should fall under the jurisdiction of the colonial courts of law. Thus the Susquehanna case was removed from the British tribunals, after which, in the heat of the Pennamite wars, and near the opening of the Revolution, Connecticut at last asserted her rights by enacting that the territory in question should form a part of Litchfield County, admitting it to representation in the General Assembly, and afterwards making it a separate county named Westmoreland.

In all these affairs, Trumbull, governor of the colony and State, was of course chiefly concerned. Johnson's view of the case was carefully considered, and acted upon so far as action was possible under the circumstances, until at last it appeared necessary to assert jurisdiction as we have seen. Another elaborate document from Trumbull's pen is the statement of this case prepared by him to be submitted to counsel in London, who, to the number of four, gave an opinion in favor of Connecticut, in opposition to the opinion which Charles Pratt, afterwards Lord Camden, had given for the Penns, whose counsel he was.

## CHAPTER XI

CONNECTICUT AS VIEWED IN LONDON — JOHNSON'S  
CALL ON LORD HILLSBOROUGH — PETITION AGAINST  
REVENUE ACTS — BISHOPS IN AMERICA — THE FIVE  
PER CENT. DUTY AND THE NEW LONDON AFFAIR —  
— THE DUTY REPEALED — TRUMBULL'S VIEWS ON  
BRITISH POLICY AND COLONIAL INDEPENDENCE

**D**URING Johnson's long sojourn in London, the policy of Connecticut was marked by the conservatism which she had practiced since the days of Andros and before. She was continually striving to maintain her rights to the utmost, and to attract as little attention as possible in so doing. The more insignificant she appeared to the home government, the better. The Mohegan case and the Susquehanna case had both drawn attention to her in London, as a colony which, if not litigious, was the cause of litigation in others. These cases had been admirably managed by Johnson, in a way to show that his colony was pursuing an honorable defense in one case, and attempting to avoid litigation in British tribunals in the other. There is no doubt, however, that notwithstanding all precautions, Connecticut was closely and jealously watched by the King's Council during the five years of Johnson's residence in London.

Early in 1768 Lord Hillsborough was made Secretary of State for the colonies. Johnson in due time made a call upon him, congratulating him on his appointment to this high office. In a long letter to Governor Pitkin, Johnson fully reports his interview with Lord Hillsborough, who, it seems, found some things to criticize regarding the relations of Connecticut to the Crown, such as the lack of frequent communication with his Majesty's Ministers, to which Johnson, in true Connecticut fashion replied, that "it would be inexcusable to take up their attention with a detail of no consequence." Other complaints and requests he answers with similar diplomacy. He closes his letter to Governor Pitkin in the following words:

"This was the substance, or rather these were the subjects (for I cannot pretend to recite all that passed) of about two hours' conversation with which his Lordship indulged me. I must do him the justice to say, he was very complaisant, candid and kind, heard with attention, replied without warmth, seemed willing to know the true state of things in America, and expressed great desire to do that country service. But I own, I gave him more credit for his complaisance than for his sentiments, and left him not well pleased to find he had entertained such ideas, and was in danger of such opinions as you see, from the tenor of his conversation, must at least have made some impression upon him, and been revolving in his mind ever since he was at the Board of Trade; nor could I by all his politeness be induced to think him that very cordial

friend to the Colonies, which he seemed so much to wish I should esteem him to be."

This important letter of Johnson's covering nearly twelve large octavo printed pages was, of course, fully discussed in the Governor's Council of which Trumbull was a member, and must have been very useful to that Council in shaping its policy towards the home government.

Governor Pitkin's letter of the following June was read before both houses of the General Assembly of Connecticut, and adopted by vote, presenting to Johnson the arguments of the colony against the Townshend revenue acts, in order to fortify him in his arguments with Lord Hillsborough upon the petition presented by the colony to the king. This petition Johnson faithfully argued with Lord Hillsborough, but could not overcome that gentleman's objections to petitions to the king rather than to Parliament, and the assertion of colonial rights rather than commercial or political expediency.

It is impossible in this connection to give more than a rather vague outline of what was taking place on both sides of the Atlantic so far as Connecticut's interests were concerned. Before Trumbull was made governor his son Joseph received a letter from Johnson, speaking of certain "injudicious proceedings" at Lebanon, for which he had been called to account in London, which proceedings had doubtless something to do with the action of his Majesty's Collector of Customs in the enforcement of the revenue acts. Speaking of other affairs, Johnson writes: "Lord Hillsborough's

questions are, I doubt not, many of them insidious enough, and it will be right to meet Ministerial art with American prudence."

The first letter after his election which Governor Trumbull writes to Johnson encloses copies of the answers made by his judicious colony to Lord Hillsborough's insidious questions and letters. After this time the letters of the Governor to Johnson give us some insight into the studious care with which Trumbull watched the interests of the colony whose chief executive he was; and give us, too, some expression of his broader views on the general subject of the relations between the colonies and the Mother Country.

His watchful interest in minor affairs which might become major is shown by the following paragraph from his next letter to Johnson, written December 12, 1769, which treats mostly of the details of the Mohegan case, but shows that other things were to be thought of:

"If the motion for a Bishop in the American Colonies is pushed, I trust you will use your influence to prevent his having authority to exercise spiritual jurisdiction over such who are not professors of the Church of England, and secular powers of any nature or kind whatever."

To which Johnson replies on February 26, 1770:

"It is not intended, at present, to send any bishops into the American Colonies; had it been, I should certainly have acquainted you with it; and should it be done at all, you may be assured, it will be in such manner as in no degree to preju-

dice, nor, if possible, even give the least offence, to any denomination of Protestants. It has, indeed, been merely a religious, and in no respect a political design. As I am myself of the Church of England, you will not doubt that I have the fullest opportunity to be intimately acquainted with all the steps that have been ever taken in this affair, and you may rely upon it that it never was, nor is, the intention, or even wish, of those who have been most sanguine in the matter, that American bishops should have the least degree of secular power . . . much less any manner of concern, or connection with Christians of any other denomination, nor even any power, properly so called over *the laity* of the Church of England.”

And so the matter of American bishops rested until the days of Bishop Seabury.

Another matter which threatened more serious consequences occurred in the early days of Trumbull's administration. Connecticut, accustomed as she was to administer her own affairs under the autonomy granted by her charter, had imposed a tax or duty of five per cent. upon all goods sold within her borders by non-resident merchants. The act imposing this duty proved to be a boomerang for this independent little State; for while she was respectfully appealing to the Crown for the maintenance of her rights in the matter of British duties on imports, it so happened that in the enforcement of her own five per cent. tax, she was, to all intents and purposes, collecting for her own treasury duties on imports from residents of the British Isles who



made loud complaints of the exaction on the return of their vessels to their home ports, as Johnson explained in a letter to Governor Trumbull on December 5, 1769. A month later we find Johnson quite concerned about the matter; for Lord Hillsborough had laid a complaint on the subject before the Lords of Trade, who had taken the matter under advisement. An interview with Lord Hillsborough was far from satisfactory, and as Johnson writes, the matter "soon became very serious", the probable outcome being that the act might be "declared null and void by the King in Council, or the Colony be enjoined by a decree of the Lords of Council to repeal it, or finally that it might be made a ground of an act of Parliament obliging the Colony in future to send home all their acts for the royal approbation or disallowance."

At the time of the first complaint regarding this act, matters were still further complicated by the report of an "affair at New London", which had reference, no doubt, to the attempts of his Majesty's Collector of Customs, Duncan Stewart, to enforce the revenue acts of Parliament without the aid of Writs of Assistance which Trumbull, as we have seen, had refused to grant.

On receipt of Johnson's letter reporting these complications and asking for full information in both cases, Trumbull replies:

"I have without loss of time procured and enclosed a printed copy of the only act I can think to be meant. The grounds of it are that many persons not inhabitants of the Colony transported

in small vessels into our harbor, rivers, and creeks, and others brought in by land, goods and merchandise to sell among the inhabitants of the Colony to the prejudice of our own merchants and shopkeepers, who pay taxes, you know, to the public in proportion to their gains and returns; when these people, who reside in the Colony but a short time, pay nothing, and are thereby enabled to undersell our own fair dealers; that many such interlopers are men of little or no integrity, who often impose on such as purchase of them.

“It is therefore judged that 5 per cent. is not more than equivalent to the tax paid by our own dealers, and the risk of imposition run by purchasers, and the charge of collecting. You will see by the terms of the act, that British goods are not distinguished; indeed, North American and West India merchandise and wares are equally liable to the same duty. On the New London affair, not having in my hands the letters from the collector of customs on that occasion, can only say at present it made no great noise here. My son, going to Hartford, is directed to get and enclose a copy of it for your use. I fancy the whole will appear of no great consequence.”

The letter also mentions a similar affair at New Haven, never reported to the Governor in detail, but believed by him “to be inferior to what hath been usual in other places, both in that country, or in this”, referring, no doubt, to recent riots in England over the Wilkes affair and other matters.

A postscript to this letter of Trumbull’s should

not pass unnoticed, showing as it does his keen interest in home affairs and in the results of non-importation. He says, "This paper I write on is better than British gilt. It is the manufacture of our own Colony." It was, no doubt, the product of Christopher Leffingwell's pioneer paper mill; and we may imagine that it was very gratifying to the Governor to find that when Great Britain imposed a tax on paper Connecticut could avoid paying the tax by manufacturing paper of her own.

Johnson, no doubt, reported to Lord Hillsborough the substance of Trumbull's letter regarding the New London affair, and it is to be hoped that he succeeded in persuading him that it was no worse than, if as bad as, sundry riots and demonstrations which were continually taking place in England at the time. In the more important matter of the five per cent. duty, he succeeded in persuading Hillsborough to postpone his design of laying it before the king in Council until the General Assembly of Connecticut should have time to correct it in their own way, or repeal it should they see fit. With its customary prudence, the General Assembly promptly repealed the act at its next session, in May, 1770, thus removing a danger which threatened those charter rights which had been so often defended and protected by this staunch, conservative little State. The matter had been, no doubt, laid before the Governor's Council by Trumbull, on receipt of Johnson's letter.

Beyond these matters, there was little in Lord Hillsborough's watchful scrutiny which brought

Connecticut directly before the home government, either for counsel or reproof. He took occasion to condemn the course of the colony in acting on the circular letter of Massachusetts by sending a petition to the king asking the repeal of the revenue acts; and it was probably with no little satisfaction that Trumbull had learned from a previous letter that Hillsborough's peremptory order to Massachusetts to rescind her circular letter had been met by criticism and ridicule in Parliament.

This same British Parliament as a legislative assembly during the years of Johnson's stay in London yields the most interesting feature of his many and faithful letters to Governors Pitkin and Trumbull, and yields, too, a study of an inside view of the vacillating and prejudiced policy of that Parliament towards the American colonies, resulting, as such a policy could not fail to result, in the war of the American Revolution. The public threats of annulling the charters of all the colonies, the proposed restriction of American manufactures, the exclusion of the colonists from the whale fisheries, the revival of the defunct statute of Henry VIII regarding alleged treason committed abroad, the sacrifice of colonial interests to political maneuvering, the quartering of British troops on the colonists, — all these matters and many more of almost equal importance, Johnson heard discussed in a Parliament containing a few of the greatest statesmen that England ever called her own, and a majority whose subservience to a narrow-minded, self-willed king completely defeated such wise meas-

ures as these great statesmen proposed. All these matters he faithfully and fully reports to the governors of Connecticut, giving to Trumbull, the surviving one at the close of the correspondence, a view of the vacillating and mistaken policy of the Mother Country, which he never could have gained from any other source. On learning of Trumbull's election as governor, Johnson writes on February 5, 1770:

"I have now the honor of yours of the 8th of November, and beg leave to repeat my hearty condolence with you on the loss the Colony has sustained in the death of our late very worthy Governor, and to rejoice sincerely with you and the Colony in your elevation to the chief command, and the happy supply of the vacancies occasioned thereby, in consequence of which, I doubt not, the affairs of the government will be well and wisely administered."

Some of the results of British legislation Trumbull saw more particularly in the neighboring colony of Massachusetts before Johnson's return, for before that time the affair of the sloop *Liberty*, and the Boston Massacre had occurred. We have seen already in a letter quoted in a previous chapter regarding the granting of Writs of Assistance, what were his views on the attitude of the colonists toward Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> As time went on these views began to assume still more definite form as the result, to a great extent, of the Johnson correspondence. And that the definite form which these

<sup>1</sup> Pages 84 and 85.

views assumed looked to the independence of the colonies more than five years before the first shot of the war was fired at Lexington, may be as plainly learned from the following extracts of his letter to Johnson on January 29, 1770, as it is learned in the case of Samuel Adams from his personal statement a year or so earlier.

Speaking of Johnson's letter of September 18, Trumbull says:

"This shows us the fluctuating, distracted state the nation [England] is in; the difficulties and embarrassments men always bring on themselves whenever they forsake the old paths of justice and equity and attempt to establish despotism; the danger of embarking deeply with any party while both are desirous to render the Colonies effectually useful and subordinate to that country, that they may reap all the fruits of our labors, and conduct all our affairs solely with a view to their own emolument. Mutual interests alone can bind the Colonies to the mother country. When those interests are separated, each side must assuredly pursue their own; and that side can use but one fair, honest and effectual way to prevent detriment from this, — which is to maintain our mutual connection in interest, to encourage our raising such growth, and making such manufactures, as will not prejudice their own in any degree equal to the advantage they bring. When any such commodities are raised or made, they ought to be taken off our hands, or the best markets pointed out to us, and the people ought not to be forced to find out other markets

by stealth; nor the trade loaded with duties and encumbered with officers to seek out our vital blood, with no other benefit to the mother country or to this than that of taking off some of their dependent, wretched sycophants and their detestable tools. This country has long been accustomed to industry and frugality, and when they see others reap the largest fruits of their labors to uphold domination over them, and live away in luxury among them, it is an unsupportable burden. The old path is the safest, and change cannot be made without the utmost danger. The people of all the Colonies, excepting officers and their dependents, so far as I can find, are firmly united for the maintenance and support of their rights and privileges, — unwilling to be taxed internally or commercially by any legislature but their own, or to have any Commissioners of the Customs to lord it over them, or drain off their earnings.”

Going on to speak of the Mohegan case and other matters, he resumes:

“It is hard to break connections with the Mother Country; but when she tries to enslave us, and turn all our labors barely to her own emolument, without considering us her own sons and free-born fellow subjects, the strictest union must be dissolved. This is our consolation, the All-wise Director of all events will bring to pass his own designs and works, — to whom we may look for direction in this our critical situation.”

## CHAPTER XII

WAR CLOUDS — COMMITTEE OF CORRESPONDENCE —  
EXCITEMENT INCREASES — TOWN MEETINGS — TREAT-  
MENT OF TORIES — FRANCIS GREEN — ABIJAH  
WILLARD — CAPTAIN DAVIS — DOCTOR BEEBE —  
REVEREND SAMUEL PETERS — THE CONTINENTAL  
CONGRESS

THE war clouds of the American Revolution gathered no less ominously or surely in Connecticut than in those neighboring colonies in which they showed more frequent electric flashes, as in the affair of the schooner *Gaspee* in Rhode Island, and in the memorable, epoch-making Boston Tea Party in Massachusetts. The British revenue sloop miscalled the *Liberty* cruised off the Connecticut coast, detained and examined many merchantmen, and was called a pirate for her pains by Nathaniel Shaw of New London;<sup>1</sup> but conservatism appears to have satisfied itself with opprobrious epithets in private correspondence in this instance, with doubtless less provocation to more violent measures than in the case of the *Gaspee*. This same conservatism, however, stood the colony in good stead, by making her the least suspected and best prepared of any of the colonies when the time came for facing the stern realities of war. Her scrupulous adherence to the

<sup>1</sup> Miss Caulkins' "History of New London", p. 483. (The author appears to have mistaken the sloop *Liberty* for the schooner *Gaspee*.)



non-importation agreement had, as we have seen, encouraged and established manufactures within her borders, in which fact we have seen Governor Trumbull expressing his satisfaction by letter to William Samuel Johnson. There is evidence in his business correspondence, too, that the natural resources and manufacturing possibilities of his colony were subjects of much concern to him, and that no man realized more fully than he the disastrous effects of British legislation upon these vital interests; first by the proposed restriction of manufactures, and then by the removal of duties on British products which competed with the colonial products which the Townshend Act especially had called into existence. It was, no doubt, with great satisfaction that the Governor signed the bill allowing to Christopher Leffingwell a bounty of "twopence the quire" on writing paper and one penny on other paper of his manufacture in his pioneer mill. The Salisbury iron mine and furnace, too, form another important item of interest to the General Assembly, and measures were taken to keep the control of this important industry within the limits of the colony. These and similar matters engaged much of the Governor's time and attention in this anxious period.

Still, affairs moved on in apparent quiet, but every movement towards securing or protecting the liberties of the country received the hearty and prompt support of Connecticut. At the May session of 1773, the General Assembly appoints a standing "Committee of Correspondence and Enquiry", at the suggestion of Virginia. Governor

Trumbull's eldest son, Joseph, appears as one of the nine members of this committee, thus enabling him to keep his father constantly informed of the important matters on which the colonies were then in correspondence.

It should be remembered that a potent influence was at work in Connecticut at this time which did not exist in the other American colonies of Great Britain, and that just for this reason we find in Connecticut fewer outbreaks of violence and quieter and more effective measures of preparation for the coming struggle than in the other colonies. The influence which brought about these results was the firm, unswerving and outspoken adherence to the principles of American liberty and the rights of American citizens which Governor Trumbull so freely and fully manifested. In every other colony the revolutionary struggle presented a twofold strife: first, against a royal or loyalist governor, and second, against the oppressive measures of King George III and his Parliament. This state of affairs was typified in the three colonies adjoining Connecticut. Massachusetts presents to view a pronounced Loyalist or Tory in the case of Governor Thomas Hutchinson, and a Governor sent over by royal commission in the case of Thomas Gage, who succeeded him. In Rhode Island, Joseph Wanton, elected like Trumbull to the governorship in 1769, proved himself so plainly a Tory that it became necessary at first to suspend, and at last to depose him, notwithstanding his personal popularity. In New York we find in William Tryon a governor who was not a son

of the soil, and whose position as a royal governor and afterwards a raider on Connecticut soil won for him a hatred which has become so traditional that it is difficult to give a hearing to a recently published defense of his previous severe measures in North Carolina. In all the other colonies similar conditions prevailed, so that Connecticut, through her patriot governor, occupies at this period one of those unique positions which, for other reasons, she previously and subsequently occupied in history.

The year 1774 was a busy and exciting one for the Governor and his Council. It opens with an adjourned session of the General Assembly on the twelfth of January, at which much legislation was in progress; and places upon the Governor and a committee appointed to assist him the new and onerous duty of adjusting individual claims to lands included in the Susquehanna claim in and about the newly made Connecticut town of Westmoreland, now in Pennsylvania. The object of this adjourned session appears to have been to dispose of as much unfinished business as possible, in order to leave the way clear for such action as might be needed in view of the alarming state of affairs about Boston, where Thomas Gage was soon to take the position of governor by royal appointment, and where he was soon to attempt to enforce the famous Port Bill. In the following May Governor Trumbull receives from Governor Gage a formal announcement of his appointment, in which he gives assurances of his readiness to coöperate with Governor Trumbull "in all matters that con-

cern the good of his Majesty's service and the welfare of his subjects." <sup>1</sup>

As time goes on in this ominous year 1774, we find the sentiment and spirit of the people of Connecticut asserting itself in bolder public utterances, and sometimes even in personal threats and violence whenever a luckless Tory dares to give utterance to political views within the borders of the colony.

The May session of the General Assembly opens with a series of resolutions in the House of Representatives, which, while declaring allegiance to George III, declare also the rights of the colony in very plain and unequivocal terms; denying the right of the British Parliament to levy taxes in the colonies for revenue, and asserting that "The only lawful representatives of the freemen of this colony are the persons they elect to serve as members of the General Assembly thereof." With this clause as a keynote, the resolutions take up the Boston Port Bill, the revival of the obsolete law of Henry VIII for transporting colonists to England for trial on certain charges, and assert that all legal proceedings are only within the jurisdiction of the courts of the colony itself. These resolutions are finally admitted by the Upper House or Governor's Council of the General Assembly to form a part of the public record of the session. This action shows quite plainly that conservatism is on the wane in Connecticut; for we may look, but in vain, among the records of other colonies for any bolder declaration of rights.

<sup>1</sup> Force's American Archives, 4th series, vol. 1, p. 344.

The town meetings, too, begin at this time to speak with no uncertain sound. In Farmington, the Port Bill is solemnly burned with appropriate ceremonies and resolutions. In Norwich, the town meeting adjourns to the church for more room, and with the Governor's son Joseph as secretary, resolutions of sympathy and aid are sent to Boston, followed by droves of sheep to the number of three hundred and ninety-one and other supplies. In the Governor's native town of Lebanon, when the Port Bill took effect on the first of June, the bell tolled during the day, and the "Town house" was draped in mourning. In Windham, the town meeting closes by denouncing the citizens of Marblehead who had presented a "fawning address" to Governor Hutchinson when he retired from office. The General Association of Congregational Ministers of Connecticut presents at this time a devout and stirring address to the Congregational clergy of Boston, assuring them of sympathy and support.

These growing sentiments could not fail, at such a time, to bring about a few instances of the treatment which Tories might expect whenever they had the hardihood to utter their unpopular views, or even to cross the Connecticut border from other colonies. The first recorded instance is that of Francis Green, a merchant from Boston, well known as one of the signers of an "adulatory address to strengthen the hands of that parricidal tool of depotism", Thomas Hutchinson. Green, coming on a business visit to Connecticut, had no sooner reached the town of Windham than he found a warm recep-

tion on the fourth of July, which two years later was to become the Glorious Fourth. Threatened with violence, he left the town on the fifth, at the urgent request of the townsmen, and reaching Norwich was not permitted to remain there. On his return to Boston, he offered a reward of one hundred dollars for such information as would lead the offenders to be convicted within the province of Massachusetts. Green's proclamation caused no small mirth, and was published with appropriate comments in the newspapers and posted in the public highways.

The sequel to this case which most concerns us is a communication from Governor Gage to Governor Trumbull, transmitting affidavits, and requesting that the guilty parties in Windham and Norwich be speedily brought to justice, to which Governor Trumbull replies that others "put a very different face on the transaction", and calls Gage's attention to the fact that "full provision is made by law for such offences, and Mr. Green may there obtain the satisfaction his cause may merit."<sup>1</sup> The expedient of referring such complainants to existing courts of law proved to be in this as in many subsequent cases a most useful one, even though there appears in it to us, and possibly appeared to the Governor, a touch of humor if not of irony. At the same time, such a course was no evasion of the issue, but rather the only legal means of meeting it. Engaged as he was at this time in engrossing public duties, he needs no excuse for such

<sup>1</sup> Stuart's "Life of Jonathan Trumbull, Sen.", p. 152.

treatment of private complaints; though the spectacle of Mr. Green returning to Connecticut for a trial of his case in the courts of law is, in imagination, quite ludicrous, in view of his previous reception.

Another gentleman from Boston whose political principles led him to share, or more than share, the fate of Mr. Green, was Colonel Abijah Willard, a member of Governor Gage's new council, who, as a contemporary account<sup>1</sup> relates, came to the town of Union for the purpose of attending to some legal business. He was met there by two of his attorneys from Windham, who "publicly renounced him and his cause, and refused to assist him any more, as they looked upon him as a traitor to his country." He was thereupon carried to Brimfield in Massachusetts, where, from about four hundred people, a council was formed which summarily decreed that he should be taken to Simsbury, and there confined in the Newgate prison, so called. After proceeding about six miles in that direction, he agreed to take an oath, expressing his regret at his official position, and promising to serve no longer on Governor Gage's council, whereupon he was released; but one Captain Davis of Brimfield, who protested against the proceedings, was stripped and given "the new fashion dress of tar and feathers."

In the same month of September we find General Joseph Spencer writing to Governor Trumbull a letter borne to him by Doctor Beebe of East Had-dam, to whom the "new fashion dress of tar and

<sup>1</sup> Force's American Archives, 4th series, vol. 1, p. 731.

feathers" had also been applied. Doctor Beebe had applied to General Spencer "to grant a surety of the peace against a few of the ringleaders in the affair", which Spencer declined to grant, upon which Doctor Beebe goes to Governor Trumbull "for advice as to the necessity or expediency of his prosecuting in this case." Spencer also asks the Governor's advice as to his own duty as a magistrate in the matter, and informs him that if he should issue warrants it would be impossible in the state of affairs then existing to execute them, although the violent treatment of Doctor Beebe was something of which he did not approve. It is well known from later proclamations that Governor Trumbull also strongly condemned such acts of violence, though he well knew, in view of the temper of the people, that it was impossible to punish them. We are only left to imagine that he advised Doctor Beebe to refrain from irritating the people by exhibiting his political doctrines, and showed him that an attempt to prosecute the offenders would probably only result in renewed violence, which he, of course, deprecated, and wished to do all in his power to prevent.

Thus it will be seen that even the day of fasting, humiliation and prayer which, by the Governor's solemn and devout proclamation had been appointed for and observed on the thirty-first of August, failed to humble the spirits of some of the people who were under the irritating influence of Tory utterances. This same month of September witnessed in another portion of Connecticut a scene



which, by means of the vivid mendacity of the Reverend Samuel Peters, has become historic, and which in the nature of the case formed the most important of the numerous violent proceedings of the time. Regarding Peters himself Doctor, J. Hammond Trumbull, one of the most accurate and scholarly of investigators, says:

“The best excuse that can be made for him is, that he was a victim of *pseudomania*; that his abhorrence of truth was in fact a disease, and that he was not morally responsible for its outbreaks.”<sup>1</sup>

Peters was a clergyman of the Church of England, a native of Hebron, Connecticut, but strongly opposed to the prevailing sentiments of the time, and, according to his own story, the man of all others who by his eloquence in town meeting persuaded the people of Hebron to vote by a large majority against sending aid or supplies to Boston at the time of the attempted enforcement of the Port Bill. This town meeting was, according to Peters’ account, called at the instigation of Governor Trumbull, who “sent his circular to every clergyman in the colony, requiring it to be read on the Sabbath-day to their respective congregations, and to urge the selectmen to warn town meetings to appoint a general contribution for the support of the poor people in Boston, shut up to starve by General Gage and Admiral Graves.”<sup>2</sup> There may be a shadow of truth in this statement, for we

<sup>1</sup> The True Blue Laws of New Haven and Connecticut, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> “The Reverend Samuel Peters, LL.D. General History of Connecticut.” Edition of 1877, p. 262.

find among the Trumbull papers a printed form of town vote for the relief of Boston, March 8, 1775 — some six months after the attack on Peters — with a form of subscription in Governor Trumbull's handwriting, to be used by the people of Lebanon. That the Governor "required" his circular — if he ever issued one — to be read by every clergyman in the colony to their congregations we may well doubt.

Peters then goes on to state that Hartford, following Hebron, "unanimously negatived to vote for a general collection, which put a stop to the town meetings in Connecticut, to the disappointment and mortification of Governor Trumbull, who laid the blame on the influence of Dr. Peters, the Episcopal clergyman of these two towns.

"Hence the Governor spread the report that Doctor Peters was a dangerous enemy to America, by his correspondence with Lord North and the bishops of England, and ought to be driven out of his native country for the safety of it. Governor Trumbull began and effected this by his Windham mobs, and the mobs of the tea-destroyers in Boston harbor."

This extract is taken from a manuscript of Peters's, now printed in an appendix to his "History of Connecticut" in the edition of 1877. It is given partly as a specimen of Peters's romantic statements.

The visits of the "Windham mobs" on Peters were two, the first being on the fourteenth of August and the other on the sixth of September, 1774. At the first visit a committee of ten waited on him,

and requested his papers. This committee afterwards signed an affirmation to the effect that they had received these papers, with the written assurance from Peters that he had not corresponded and would not correspond with his English friends regarding the existing state of affairs. They left him without injuring him in any way, and received his thanks for their treatment of him.

Certain statements over the signatures of John Grou and John Peters regarding this visit of August fourteenth, bear such unmistakable marks of the literary style of the Reverend Samuel Peters that it must be inferred that, if Grou and John Peters were not men of straw, the statement published over their names was composed for them by the Reverend Samuel, and is entitled to the same credit as other works of his authorship.

The second visit to Peters on the sixth of September came much nearer to serious results. The Bolton Committee of Correspondence had caused his so-called "Resolves of the Town of Hebron", to which the committee of August had caused him to affix his name, to be published in the *New London Gazette*. These Resolves were of a kind hardly to be tolerated at the time; and a long argument which he held with the committee on this second visit, and subsequently with the entire assembly, served to demonstrate the foolishness of preaching to which he was so prone. But a moving cause of disturbance was the discharge of firearms, during his harangue, in Peters's house, which upon examination proved to be well stocked with firearms, am-

munition, swords and clubs, though he had assured the committee "that he had no arms in the house, except one or two old guns out of repair." Notwithstanding the provocation, the inventory of damage by the mob appears to have been the breaking of one window sash, one punch bowl and glass, and the tearing of Mr. Peters's gown and shirt in the course of the disturbance, which was at last quieted by the signing of a paper which the people had prepared for him, whereupon he was released from the custody of the mob, and departed amidst their cheers, accompanied perhaps by jeers.

Peters's own account of the affair reports his rescue from the mob, of whom he says Governor Trumbull's son David was one of the leaders, by "three bold troopers" of Hebron, who said to the "commander" of the mob, "We have to come to kill you, or deliver Doctor Peters. Resign him or die!" — placing their pistols at the commander's breast. They said, "Take him away and be silent." They then instantly led him away.

The only account we have of his visit to Governor Trumbull on the following day is from Peters's own hand, and in a strain quite similar to his account of his rescue from a mob of three hundred incensed men by three bold troopers of Hebron. He seems, for some reason, to be particularly bitter in his mention of the Governor and his son David, so much so that seven years later there was published in London a "History of Jonathan Trumbull, the Rebel Governor", which Doctor J. Hammond Trumbull says is "evidently from the pen of Peters."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> True Blue Laws of Connecticut and New Haven, p. 32.

After his unpleasant encounters with "Windham mobs", Peters soon came to the conclusion that Connecticut was too hot to hold him, and fled to Boston, where through marvellous escapes from his pursuers, which rival the exploits of Münchhausen, he sets sail for the more congenial clime of England, where he is enabled to pursue for the rest of his life his lying fulminations and his fairy stories regarding his native land.

The publication in London, to which reference has been made, appeared in *The Political Magazine* for January, 1781, and is of such a virulent personal character that a few extracts must be made from it both as a further illustration of such utterances as those of Peters and as a specimen of the calumnies to which the Governor was subject at about this time. The article is entitled "History of Jonathan Trumbull, the present Rebel Governor of Connecticut, from his Birth, early in this Century, to the present Day."

After describing the ancestry, birth and early life of the Governor as only Peters could describe them, the article goes on to treat of his marriage in the following words:

"No sooner had Jonathan taken his degree, than he became a preacher in an independent way, and was esteemed to be *a man of grace*; but having a bad delivery, he could not obtain a parish. However, his politeness, apparent goodness, and address, recommended him to Miss Robinson, a descendant of the famous Reverend Mr. Robinson, head of a Sect both in Old and New England. His marriage

with this Lady, whose father was a burning and shining light among the independents and children of the regicides, who settled in New England, raised him from obscurity to a state of nobility, for all who had any blood in their veins of the first settlers, or of the regicides, are considered in New England as of the rank of the *Noblesse*. Mr. Jonathan's matrimonial connection giving him the prospect of preferment in civil life, he bid adieu to the pulpit, and commenced merchant."

After accusing him of dishonesty in business, and intolerance in religion, the four and a half closely printed pages contain the following personal description: —

"Jonathan Trumbull, the Rebel Governor of Connecticut, a man of desperate fortune, with an abundant share of cunning, is about five feet, seven inches high, has dark eyes, a Roman nose, sallow countenance, long chin, prominent forehead, high and broad cheek bones, hollow cheeks and short neck — in person of a handsome figure and very active — now [1781] between 70 and 80 years of age. He is morose in his natural temper, reserved in his speech, vain and covetous, envious and spiteful to a great degree, never forgiving or forgetting an affront. He is at the same time very artful; he will smile in the face of those he hates, and court their friendship at the very moment he is endeavoring by every means in his power to effect their ruin. As to justice, he never had an idea of it; at least he never showed any in practice; always judging according to a party spirit, which ever domineered in his merciless soul."

There is reason to believe that the description of the Governor's personal appearance is more accurate than most of Peters's utterances, for the reason that a price had been set on the Governor's head, which price Peters was particularly anxious that some enterprising detective might earn.

In the following December, Governor Trumbull issued a proclamation in which he refers to the affair of Doctor Peters, and prohibits violent proceedings such as we have noted in this and similar cases, not forgetting to speak of "the threatening aspect of Divine Providence on the rights and liberties of the People." In view of the possible effect of the report which Peters might make in England of his own treatment and of the rebellious attitude of the colony, the Governor prepared a full statement of the case, doubtless for transmission to the agent of Connecticut residing in London. This statement closes with the following paragraph:

"Mr. Peters's religious sentiments, his being a member of the Church of England and a clergyman, were not the reasons of these transactions. Some men who were present were of the same denomination, and dissatisfied with him as well as the others. Had he been of any other denomination in religious sentiments, his treatment would doubtless have been the same."

It should be noted that the Committee of Correspondence had met at New London, in July of this year, and by authority of the General Assembly had appointed Silas Deane, Eliphalet Dyer and Roger Sherman delegates to the first Continental

Congress, a proceeding vitally interesting to the Governor, as appears by his correspondence with these delegates during the session. The fact that his son Joseph had been appointed an alternate in this Congress for Roger Sherman, who was able to act as a delegate, added to the Governor's interest in this memorable body, and showed the confidence of the people in him and his family.



## CHAPTER XIII

1775 — TRUMBULL AT THE AGE OF SIXTY-FIVE —  
PREPARATIONS FOR WAR — EXTRA SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY — ROYAL MEASURES TO PRE-  
VENT A SECOND SESSION OF THE CONTINENTAL  
CONGRESS — TRUMBULL'S LETTER TO THE EARL OF  
DARTMOUTH

G OVERNOR TRUMBULL, now a man of sixty-five, enters at this advanced stage of his life upon the supreme period of his career. Instead of relaxing his energies, as might be expected, he redoubles them, devoting to the cause of American freedom in self-forgetful and self-sacrificing patriotism the wise experience gained in forty years of public life. This experience is made effective by the inbred Puritan vigor of his ripe manhood. Puritan principles underlie and inform his actions. His intelligence and benevolence carry him far beyond the narrow bounds of bigotry and intolerance. His views of government look constantly to the great, wise and just provisions of the Supreme Ruler, whose laws and ways of government have been the constant study of his life. Such infraction of those laws and ways as he has seen for ten years or more in the vacillating, but always unjust and oppressive policy of Great Britain towards her American colonies fill him with growing abhorrence. His sole belief and sole trust is

in the righteousness of his country's cause. This abiding principle, animated and actuated by his inbred and inborn love of country, formed the inspiration for his course; and we are now to see how he worked under this inspiration.

The year 1775 shows at its beginning active preparations for the military organization and equipment of Connecticut. The Governor's son Joseph writes from Windham to his father on December 30, 1774, urging the immediate purchase of ammunition before the harbors of the coast are blockaded with British vessels to prevent the landing of it. The Governor at once calls his Council together at Hartford, where it is voted on the fourth of January to direct the Treasurer of the colony to procure three hundred barrels of gunpowder, fifteen tons of lead, and sixty thousand good flints. On the fifth a proclamation is issued from the council chamber appointing a fast on the first day of the coming February. Thus did the Governor show his trust in Divine Providence and his belief in our present-day aphorism, "God helps those who help themselves." Roger Sherman in the following month procures a portion of this ammunition from New York; and measures are taken to import powder, some of which arrived at New London in the following April. The towns had been ordered, too, by the General Assembly at the October session of 1774 to provide double the quantity of powder, balls and flints which, up to that time, had been required by law.

This same October session had adjourned until

such time as the Governor "should see cause to call it to meet again." In the following March he evidently saw cause, for a session was called at New Haven for that month "by adjournment and special order of the Governor." Many military commissions are granted, new military companies formed, and some naval affairs regulated. The docket is also cleared of civil business. Other business of a kind new to this Assembly figures prominently in this session. It is evident that the Governor, in his earnest desire to prevent such violent treatment of Tories as we have seen in the previous year, had determined to refer all complaints and information regarding them to the General Assembly, to be legally and regularly dealt with.

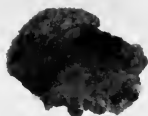
The wisdom of this course is evident from the fact that but one report can be found during this momentous year of a case in which the people took matters into their own hands, and this cannot be called a case in which personal violence was used. At the same time, after the adjournment of the first Continental Congress in October, 1774, the Tory element in the western parts of Connecticut pronounced itself in such a way as to cause, perhaps, some concern, and certainly much indignation. The individual cases of Abraham Blackslee of New Haven, captain of a military company; of Isaac Quintard and Filer Dibble of Stamford, also captains, are duly referred to committees with instructions to report at the next session regarding the charges of Toryism against them.

The town of Ridgefield, little dreaming that in two years one of the fiercest fights of the Revolution within the borders of Connecticut would take place on her soil, voted in town meeting on the sixth of February, among other things, "That it would be dangerous and hurtful to the inhabitants of this Town to adopt said [Continental] Congress's measures, and we hereby publicly disapprove of, and protest against said Congress, and the measures by them directed, as unconstitutional, as subversive of our real liberties, and as countenancing licentiousness." Newtown soon after adopted similar resolutions. With these two cases the General Assembly thus deals:

"It being represented to this House, that the towns of Ridgefield and Newtown have come into and published certain resolutions injurious to the rights of this Colony, in direct opposition to the reported resolves of this House, and of dangerous tendency:

*"Resolved;* that Colo. Joseph Platt Cook, and Colo. John Read be a committee to enquire into the truth of said representation, and how far any person or persons holding commissions under the government have been any ways active or concerned in promoting the measures taken by said towns; and report make of what they shall find to the General Assembly to be held at Hartford May next."

The records are silent regarding the reports of this committee, nor was any action apparently taken regarding resolutions published later in Rivington's *Gazette* by the Reading Association, and still later by New Milford, all denouncing the Continental



Congress. Before the May session at which the committee was to report, the Lexington alarm had spread through Connecticut, and was far more effective than any legislation in exterminating such sporadic cases of Toryism as those just referred to.

In the meantime, the Earl of Dartmouth by command of the king had issued to each colonial governor in America the royal mandate by which it was expected that a second Continental Congress would be prevented, enjoining upon Trumbull, as on all the governors, to use his utmost endeavors "to prevent the appointment of deputies, and to exhort all persons to desist from such an unjustifiable proceeding."

This order was doubtless summarily disposed of in the Governor's council. Certain it is that no thought of complying with it existed in the mind of the Governor or of any member of this body, and certain it is that Connecticut sent her full quota of representatives to the second, as to the first Continental Congress. The time had come, however, to inform the Earl of Dartmouth of the position of Connecticut in the then existing critical state of affairs, and upon Governor Trumbull fell the duty of addressing a letter to the noble Earl. This letter was sent by vote of the General Assembly, having been regularly approved by vote of both houses, with the request that it be transmitted "to his Lordship as soon as opportunity will permit." The only inference to be drawn from the records regarding it is that the Governor, finding it a matter of official courtesy to write to the Earl of Dart-

mouth, found the matter of such importance that he deemed it necessary to submit the draft of his letter to the General Assembly, in accordance with a long established custom. This letter forms such a striking example of the Governor's official correspondence that it seems best to reproduce it here in full, although it is to be found in print in numerous publications:

“New Haven, March, 1775.

“My Lord: I duly received your Lordship's letter of the 10th of December last, enclosing his Most Gracious Majesty's speech to his Parliament and the addresses in answer thereunto, which I have taken the earliest opportunity to lay before the General Assembly of the Colony, and am now to return you their thanks for this communication.

“It is, my Lord, with the deepest concern and anxiety that we contemplate the unhappy dissensions which have taken place between the Colonies and Great Britain, which must be attended with the most fatal consequences to both, unless speedily terminated. We consider the interests of the two countries as inseparable, and are shocked at the idea of any disunion between them. We wish for nothing so much as a speedy and happy settlement upon constitutional grounds, and cannot apprehend why it might not be effected if proper steps were taken. It is certainly an object of that importance as to merit the attention of every wise and good man, and the accomplishment of it would add lustre to the first character upon earth.

“The origin and progress of these unhappy disputes we need not point out to you: they are perfectly known to your Lordship. From apprehensions on one side, and jealousies, fears and distresses on the other, fomented and increased by the representations of artful and designing men, unfriendly to the liberties of America, they have risen to that alarming height at which we now see them, threatening the most essential prejudice, if not entire ruin, to the whole Empire. On the one hand, we do assure your Lordship that we do not wish to weaken or impair the authority of the British Parliament in any matters essential to the welfare and happiness of the whole Empire. On the other, it will be admitted that it is our duty, and that we should be even highly culpable, if we should not claim and maintain the constitutional rights and liberties derived to us as men and Englishmen; as the descendants of Britons and members of an Empire whose fundamental principle is the liberty and security of the subject. British supremacy and American liberty are not incompatible with each other. They have been seen to exist and flourish together for more than a century. What now renders them inconsistent? Or, if anything be further necessary to ascertain the one and limit the other, why may it not be amicably adjusted, every occasion and ground of future controversy be removed, and all that has unfortunately passed be buried in perpetual oblivion?

“The good people of this Colony, my Lord, are unfeignedly loyal and firmly attached to his Maj-

esty's person, family and government. They are willing and ready freely as they have formerly most cheerfully done upon every requisition made to them, to contribute to the utmost of their abilities to the support of his Majesty's government, and to devote their lives and fortunes to his service; and in the last war did actually expend in his Majesty's service more than four hundred thousand pounds sterling beyond what they received any compensation for. But the unlimited powers lately claimed by the British Parliament drove them to the borders of despair. These powers, carried into execution, will deprive them of all property, and are incompatible with every idea of civil liberty. They must hold all they possess at the will of others, and will have no property which they can, voluntarily and as freemen, lay at the foot of the throne as a mark of their affection and devotion to his Majesty's service.

"Why, my Lord, should our fellow-subjects in Great Britain alone enjoy the high honor and satisfaction of presenting their free gifts to their Sovereign? Or if this be a distinction in which they will permit none to participate with them, yet, in point of honour, it should be founded on the gift of their own property, and not of that of their fellow-subjects in the more distant parts of the Empire.

"It is with particular concern and anxiety that we see the unhappy situation of our fellow-subjects in the town of Boston in the Province of Massachusetts Bay, where we behold many thousands of his Majesty's virtuous and loyal subjects re-



duced to the utmost distress by the operation of the Port Act, and the whole Province thrown into a state of anarchy and confusion by the Act for changing the constitution of the Province and depriving them of some of their charter rights. We are at a loss to conceive how the destruction of the East India Company's tea could be a just or reasonable ground for punishing so severely thousands of innocent people who had no hand in that transaction, and that even without giving them any opportunity to be heard in their own defence.

"Give us leave to recommend to your Lordship's most serious and candid attention the unhappy case of that distressed people, and in effect of all the Colonies, whose fate seems to be involved in theirs, and who are therefore most anxiously distressed for them. Permit us to hope that by your Lordship's kind and benevolent interposition, some wise and happy plan will be devised, which may relieve us from our present anxieties and restore that harmony between Great Britain and the Colonies which we all most ardently wish for, and which alone can render us truly happy.

"I am, my Lord, in behalf of the Governor and Company of Connecticut, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient and humble servant."

Thus, in earnest endeavor honorably, reasonably and peacefully to regain the rights of his people, did the Governor labor to the utmost, hoping that success might attend his efforts.

## CHAPTER XIV

THE LEXINGTON ALARM — EMBASSY TO GENERAL  
GAGE — TREATMENT OF THE AMBASSADORS BY MASSA-  
CHUSETTS — DIFFERENCES SETTLED — PREPARA-  
TIONS FOR WAR

THE extra session of the General Assembly adjourned on the tenth of March, to meet again on the thirteenth of April "unless the Governor, or in his absence the Deputy Governor shall see cause to give notice that the public business of the Colony does not require the convention of the Assembly at that time." Such notice the Governor must have given, to be followed by an entirely different notice but a few days later, when the Lexington alarm reached Connecticut, spreading like wildfire from town to town, and reaching the Governor on the twentieth. Just how or where it reached him, it is impossible to say in the absence of contemporary records and in the presence of many conflicting accounts, all apparently based on varying traditions or theories. There is no doubt that the news of the Lexington fight reached him promptly, either carried to him by Israel Putnam from Brooklyn to Lebanon, or by some other swift rider reaching Norwich, where one account says the Governor received the news. Connecticut men hurried at once to the front on receipt of the news,

in companies and squads, without organization, and without waiting for orders; to return in a few days to join or give place to the organized force for which the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts was calling. News comes from Putnam under date of the twenty-first that six thousand men are expected from Connecticut "to be at Cambridge as speedily as possible." The Governor calls a special meeting of the General Assembly for the twenty-sixth of April, which was doubtless as soon as a full session could convene at Hartford in those days of slow communication and transportation.

What may have been the message or address of the Governor to this session we shall probably never know. That it was a message unswerving in its adherence to the rights of the people, and that its words were the words of patriotism tempered by wisdom, we may be sure.

The first action of the session, after some unimportant military regulations, and the more important placing of an embargo upon the exportation of provisions needed for the army, was to appoint William Samuel Johnson and Erastus Wolcott to "wait upon his Excellency Governor Gage with the letter written to him by his honour our Governor by the desire of this Assembly, and confer with him on the subject contained in said letter and request his answer."

This action was probably upon the motion of Roger Sherman, as the resolve is in his handwriting. How far the Governor may have been instrumental in this movement it is impossible to say. His letter

of the previous month to the Earl of Dartmouth so far met the approval of the General Assembly that the policy of appeal to the highest authorities seemed still the proper policy for Connecticut, in which colony there still lingered that traditional conservatism which was soon to disappear in work for the common cause. Governor Trumbull's letter to Gage reads as follows:

“Hartford, April 28, 1775.

“Sir: The alarming situation of publick affairs in this country, and the late unfortunate transactions in the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, have induced the General Assembly of this Colony, now sitting in this place, to appoint a committee of their body to wait upon your Excellency, and to desire me, in their name, to write to you relative to those very interesting matters.

“The inhabitants of this Colony are intimately connected with the people of your Province, and esteem themselves bound by the strongest ties of friendship, as well as of common interest, to regard with attention whatever concerns them. You will not, therefore, be surprised that your first arrival at Boston with a body of his Majesty's troops, for the declared purpose of carrying into execution certain acts of Parliament, which, in their apprehension, were unconstitutional and oppressive, should have given the good people of this Colony a very just and general alarm. Your subsequent proceedings in fortifying the town of Boston, and other military preparations, greatly increased their ap-

prehensions for the safety of their friends and brethren. They could not be unconcerned spectators of their sufferings in what they esteemed the common cause of this country; but the late hostile and secret inroads of some of the troops under your command into the heart of the country, and the violences they have committed, have driven them almost to a state of desperation. They feel now, not only for their friends, but for themselves and their dearest interest and connections.

“We wish not to exaggerate: we are not sure of every part of our information, but by the best intelligence that we have yet been able to obtain, the late transaction was a most unprovoked attack upon the lives and property of his Majesty’s subjects; and it is represented to us that such outrages have been committed as would disgrace even barbarians, and much more Britons, so highly famed for humanity as well as bravery.

“It is feared, therefore, that we are devoted to destruction, and that you have it in command and intention to ravage and desolate the country. If this is not the case, permit us to ask, why have these outrages been committed? Why is the town of Boston now shut up? To what end are all the hostile preparations that are daily making? And why do we continually hear of fresh destinations of troops to this country? The people of this Colony, you may rely upon it, abhor the idea of taking up arms against the troops of their sovereign, and dread nothing so much as the horrors of a civil war. But, sir, at the same time, we beg leave to assure your

Excellency, that as they apprehend themselves justified by the principle of self defence, they are most firmly resolved to defend their rights and privileges to the last extremity; nor will they be restrained from giving aid to their brethren if any unjustifiable attack is made upon them.

“Be so good, therefore, as to explain yourself upon this most important subject, so far as is consistent with your duty to our common sovereign. Is there no way to prevent this unhappy dispute from coming to extremities? Is there no alternative but absolute submission, or the desolations of war? By that humanity which constitutes so amiable a part of your character, and for the honour of our sovereign and the glory of the British empire, we entreat you to prevent it if possible. Surely it is to be hoped that the temperate wisdom of the Empire might even yet find expedients to restore peace, that so all parts of the empire may enjoy their particular rights, honours and immunities. Certainly this is an event most devoutly to be wished; and will it not be consistent with your duties to suspend the operations of war on your part, and enable us on ours to quiet the minds of the people, at least till the result of some further deliberations may be known.

“The importance of the occasion will no doubt sufficiently apologize for the earnestness with which we address you, and any seeming impropriety which may attend it, as well as induce you to give us the most explicit and favorable answer in your power.

"I am, with great esteem and respect, in behalf of the General Assembly,

"Sir, your most obedient servant!

"To his Excellency Thomas Gage, Esq."

Pursuant to the resolve of the General Assembly, Johnson and Wolcott undertook their embassy to General Gage, against Johnson's advice and inclinations, if not against Wolcott's. They found Gage in Boston with some difficulty, and obtained an interview with him and a reply to the Governor's letter. Upon their return, they found their horses missing, and found themselves in the hands of a sheriff who haled them before the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, where Johnson was requested to open and read the letter of General Gage, which he declined to do, as it was addressed to Governor Trumbull. Schooled in the diplomacy of his five years in London, Johnson handed the letter, sealed, to the President of the Provincial Congress, saying to him that the Connecticut committee were in his power, and that he could open the letter if he thought he had a right to do so, at the same time reminding him that Connecticut was not under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts. Intercolonial courtesy prevailed, and after a delay of some two hours, the letter was returned to Johnson unopened, and the Connecticut ambassadors were allowed to proceed to their homes.

This rather high-handed proceeding appears to have been the result of information volunteered to the Massachusetts Congress by General Israel Put-

nam and Colonel Elisha Porter. We are left to imagine from Putnam's previous proceedings that anything like negotiations for peace would be distasteful to him, and that he improved the opportunity for showing to the Connecticut ambassadors the temper of the Massachusetts Congress.

The letter which Gage sent in reply to the Governor's queries was, of course, a vindication of the policy which he had pursued and intended to pursue. A few extracts from the letter will show how the more important of the Governor's questions were answered, so far as they were answered at all.<sup>1</sup>

"You ask, why is the town of Boston now shut up? I can only refer you for an answer to those bodies of armed men who now surround the town and prevent all access to it. The hostile preparations you mention are such as the conduct of the people of this Province has rendered it prudent to make, for the defence of those under my command. . . .

"You inquire, is there no way to prevent this unhappy dispute from coming to extremities? Is there no alternative except by absolute submission or the desolations of war? I answer, I hope there is. The King and Parliament seem ready to hold out terms of reconciliation, consistent with the honor and interest of Great Britain and the rights and privileges of the Colonies. They have mutually declared their readiness to attend to any real grievances of the Colonies, and to afford them any just

<sup>1</sup> The letter in full may be found in Colonial Records of Connecticut, vol. 14, p. 443, and in Force's American Archives, 4th series, vol. 2, p. 482.



and reasonable indulgence which shall, in a dutiful and constitutional manner, be laid before them; and his Majesty adds, it is his ardent wish that this disposition may have a happy effect on the temper and conduct of his subjects in America. I must add, likewise, the Resolution of the 27th of February, on the grand dispute of taxation and revenue, leaving it to the Colonies to tax themselves, under certain conditions. Here is surely a foundation for an accommodation, to people who wish a reconciliation rather than a destructive war between countries so nearly connected by the ties of blood and interest: but I fear the leaders of this Province have been, and still are, intent only on shedding blood. . . .

“You ask whether it will not be consistent with my duty to suspend the operations of war on my part? I have commenced no operations of war but defensive; such you cannot wish me to suspend, while I am surrounded by an armed country, who have already begun, and threaten further to prosecute an offensive war, and are now violently depriving me, the King’s troops, and many others of the King’s subjects under my immediate protection, of all the conveniences and necessities of life, with which the country abounds. But it must quiet the minds of all reasonable people when I assure you that I have no disposition to injure or molest quiet and peaceable subjects; but on the contrary shall esteem it my greatest happiness to defend and protect them against every species of violence and oppression.”

The General Assembly had adjourned on the

sixth of May without waiting to hear the report of Johnson and Wolcott on their embassy to General Gage, and so his reply must have been delivered to Governor Trumbull personally at Hartford. It was soon followed by an official letter from the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, under date of May second, enclosing depositions regarding the battle of Lexington, warning Connecticut to place no confidence in General Gage and closing with these words:

“It is evidently the business of the general, to subjugate these and the other Colonies; and, we think, there are the most convincing proofs that, in order to effect it, he is constantly aiming to suspend their preparations for defence, until his reinforcements shall arrive; but, although we have been under great apprehension with respect to the advantages which the conference of Connecticut with General Gage might give our enemies, yet we have the greatest confidence in the wisdom and vigilance of your respectable assembly and colony, as well as of our other sister colonies; and have reason to hope, that, while he fails in his intentions to lull and deceive this continent, he can never accomplish his designs to conquer it.”

In the meantime a committee from Massachusetts had been sent to Connecticut, as to some of the other colonies, to hasten preparations for war, if they should need hastening, and to this committee a much more argumentative letter was sent concerning the embassy to General Gage. Much time of the Governor and his council was doubtless spent

with this committee, which consisted of Jedediah Foster, Timothy Danielson and John Bliss. A greater than these appears to have been in Connecticut at or about the same time in the person of John Adams, who writes to his wife on the thirtieth of April, from Hartford:

“The Assembly of this Colony is now sitting at Hartford. We are treated with great tenderness, sympathy and respect. Everything is doing by this Colony that can be done by men, both for New York and Boston. . . .”

Governor Trumbull replies to the official letter of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts promptly, on the fourth of May, saying:

“Your letter of the 2d of May instant is received. You need not fear our firmness, deliberation and unanimity, to pursue the measures which appear best for our common defence and safety, and in no degree to relax our vigilant preparations for that end, and to act in union and concert with our sister colonies. We shall be cautious of trusting promises which it may be in the power of any one to evade. We hope no ill consequences will attend our embassy to General Gage. We should be glad to be furnished with the evidence, duly authenticated, concerning the attack, on the 19th of April last, at Lexington, which it is presumed you have taken. Although we are at a distance from the most distressing scenes before your eyes, yet we are most sensibly affected with the alarming relations of them.”

Thus closed this little episode. It appears, from

the correspondence of others regarding it, to have been a surprise to Connecticut that Massachusetts should take exception to her action in the matter, and it was generally believed that she misunderstood the temper and spirit in which the embassy was undertaken. At all events, the two colonies settled such differences as existed at the time in a perfectly amicable and satisfactory way, thanks, in great measure, to the temperate and conciliatory attitude of Governor Trumbull, who might have gone into a vindication of the course of Connecticut had he seen fit, and had he fully concurred in that course, of which there must always exist some doubt.

It is hardly necessary to say that the visit of the Massachusetts committee was not needed for the purpose of creating patriotic sentiment in Connecticut. Every action of the General Assembly at its special session in April looked to the military organization of the colony, and the forwarding of the six regiments for which Massachusetts had asked. With her usual prudence Connecticut saw well to the equipment of these troops. Captain Joseph Trumbull, the Governor's eldest son, is appointed Commissary General for the colony. Bills of credit are issued to the sum of fifty thousand pounds, with taxes laid to meet the issue at maturity.

With the Governor it was a time of stress and strain. His position officially was that of "Captain General and Governor in Chief", involving the direction of the military forces of the colony in addition to his other official duties, to which was added that of Chief Naval Officer of the colony.

## CHAPTER XV

TICONDEROGA — THE COUNCIL OF SAFETY — POWDER  
FOR BUNKER HILL — CORRESPONDENCE WITH WASH-  
INGTON — THE FIRST AND ONLY MISUNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND TRUMBULL — SEARS'S  
RAID — THE CONNECTICUT "DESERTERS"

WHILE Connecticut was undertaking independent negotiations with General Gage, the sole result of which appears to have been needless alarm in Massachusetts, the General Assembly of Connecticut had, as we have seen, mobilized the troops of the colony for the assistance of her neighbors. There was, too, even before the letter to General Gage was despatched, a secret movement in progress for the first offensive military operation of the Revolution, the capture of Fort Ticonderoga. Thus this unique colony, under the leadership of Trumbull, exhausted every resource which was available under the circumstances; by negotiations for peace, preparations for war, and the first aggressive act of the American Revolution. The capture of Fort Ticonderoga on the tenth of May of this year was due entirely to Connecticut enterprise and energy, even though the force which effected the capture was composed largely of "Green Mountain boys", under the leadership of Ethan Allen of Connecticut birth, solely because it was imprudent to march a

force from Hartford to Ticonderoga owing to the need of secrecy in the expedition. The treasury of Connecticut furnished the money for the enterprise, upon the individual obligations of its projectors; and an important factor in the success was the sanction and counsel of the Governor and his Council, of which there is ample proof in contemporary documents.<sup>1</sup>

It needs no stretch of the imagination to reach the conclusion that this expedition was in every way promoted by the Governor, and that he rejoiced in its success. His views of the matter may best be learned from the following extract from his letter of May twenty-fifth to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, congratulating that body on this important capture.

“The necessity of securing and maintaining the posts on the lakes for the defence of the frontiers becomes daily more evident from the iterated intelligence we receive of the plan formed by our enemies to distress us by inroads of Canadians and savages from the Province of Quebec upon the adjacent settlements. The enclosed copy of a letter from our delegates attending at New York, to communicate measures with the Provincial Congress in that city, throws an additional light on this subject, and is thought worthy to be communicated to you; and whilst the designs of our enemies against us fill with concern, we cannot omit to observe the smiles of Providence upon us in revealing their wicked plans, and hitherto prospering the

<sup>1</sup> Force's American Archives, 4th series, vol. 2, pp. 507, 558.

attempts of the colonies to frustrate them. With a humble reliance on the continuance of divine favor and protection in the cause of the justice of which a doubt cannot be entertained, the General Assembly of this Colony are ready to co-operate with the other colonies for their common defence, and to contribute their proportion of men and other necessities for maintaining the posts on the frontiers, or defending or repelling invasions in any other quarter, agreeable to the advice of the Continental Congress."

Captain Edward Mott of Preston, Connecticut, had been despatched to Philadelphia by the Governor with the news of the capture of Ticonderoga, in which he had held the position of a leader, issuing to Ethan Allen his warrant for holding the fort after its bloodless capture, "agreeable to the power and authority to us given by the Colony of Connecticut", while awaiting orders from that colony or from the Continental Congress. This second Congress, it will be remembered, opened its session in Philadelphia on the morning of the capture, and although Allen may have been a little premature in demanding the surrender in the name of the Continental Congress, then to sit for the second time, the session and the capture must have occurred within a few hours of each other.

The constant demands upon the Governor's time and attention were seen to be so urgent as to require a specially constituted council to assist him in his arduous and important duties. The regularly constituted council could not be convened promptly

enough from various portions of the State to meet the sudden and imperative calls which were continually arising. For this reason, the General Assembly, at its May session of 1775, appointed Matthew Griswold, Eliphalet Dyer, Jabez Huntington, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Nathaniel Wales, Junior, Jedediah Elderkin, Joshua West and Benjamin Huntington, "a Committee to assist the Governor when the Assembly is not sitting, to order and direct the marches and stations of the inhabitants inlisted and assembled for the especial defence of the Colony, or any part or parts of them, as they shall judge necessary, and to give order from time to time for furnishing and supplying said inhabitants with every matter and thing that may be needful to render the defence of the Colony effectual."

This act evidently contemplated that the meetings of this committee should be held at Lebanon, three of its members besides the Governor being residents of that town, and the other members, with the exception of Deputy Governor Griswold, being residents of the then adjoining towns of Norwich and Windham.

This committee soon became known as the Council of Safety, and was continued during the entire war, holding at Lebanon alone nearly twelve hundred meetings during that period. The little building in which these meetings were held, and which was Governor Trumbull's store and office, is known to this day as the War Office, and stands, repaired and restored to its original condition, under



the ownership of the Connecticut Society of Sons of the American Revolution. The Governor's native town of Lebanon was in these days a place of no small importance, standing on the direct road to Boston, and ranking fourteenth in population, eleventh in taxable property and third in the number of men who responded to the Lexington alarm. Notwithstanding the numerous special sessions of the General Assembly, it is hardly too much to say that the proceedings within the walls of the humble little gambrel-roofed War Office were of equal if not of greater importance to those of the Assembly itself. The times brought continually emergencies and sudden demands, and the Council of Safety alone could supply them. The records of the body may be rather prosaic in their matter-of-fact statements of routine and action; but taken in connection with the correspondence and events of the time, they are at times little short of dramatic.

The first meeting of the Council of Safety was held on the seventh of June, just a week after the adjournment of the General Assembly, to act upon the urgent calls from Massachusetts for powder, which the Governor presented to the Council. As a result of this meeting, fifty barrels of one hundred and eight pounds each were ordered to be forwarded at once from the stores of this provident colony, which furnished more than one half the entire supply of powder which was used by the Americans ten days later at the battle of Bunker Hill. Although William Williams, the Governor's son-in-law, was appointed clerk of the Council, and

although the official record of this meeting is in his handwriting, it is a noteworthy fact that loose leaves of the records for the first two months of its sessions are in Governor Trumbull's handwriting differing only slightly in phraseology, but not in substance.

At this same memorable first meeting of the Council of Safety, "it was moved by his Honor the Governor" that the whole or a part of Colonel Samuel Holden Parsons's regiment, then stationed at New London, be ordered to march at once to the front, to join the forces under command of General Spencer. Although this regiment had been stationed at New London for the defense of Connecticut, two companies were sent forward in time to take part in the then impending battle of Bunker Hill; and on the very day of the battle the remaining six companies were ordered to join the other two at the seat of war.

The news of the battle reached Lebanon at about ten o'clock on the evening of the eighteenth of June, and the Council of Safety convened at once on the nineteenth. Measures were taken not only to perfect the organization of the Connecticut troops in the field, but to bring them under the immediate command of the Commander in Chief, for the time being, General Artemas Ward. Orders were issued by vote of the Council, and doubtless upon motion or suggestion of the Governor, commanding all Connecticut generals to subject themselves to the command of General Ward. So concerned had the colony now become for the general

welfare that the neighboring colonies of Rhode Island and New Hampshire were urged to issue similar orders.

The short command of General Ward was soon to cease, for Congress had already appointed Washington Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, and he was at the time on his way to Cambridge to assume his command. It is barely possible that Governor Trumbull had met him nineteen years before when, in 1756, he passed through Connecticut as a young colonel with his retinue after his conference with Governor Shirley at Boston. However this may be, a correspondence and personal acquaintance were now to begin which formed a factor second to none in the active prosecution of the war of the Revolution. The correspondence begins on the thirteenth of July when, at a meeting of the Council of Safety, the Governor presents for approval two letters which he has addressed to Washington; the first of which congratulates him on his appointment, and the second refers to dissatisfaction of Connecticut generals over the appointments made by the Continental Congress, which degraded General Spencer and General Wooster from the rank they had each held under their provincial commissions, and advanced General Putnam above both of them, though he had up to that time been below them in provincial rank. On this same thirteenth of July, General Spencer had reached Lebanon with loud complaints of his treatment by Congress, and was with much difficulty "persuaded to return to the army, and not at present quit the

service as he proposed." He is made the bearer of these two important letters to Washington. After congratulating him on his appointment by Congress, Trumbull writes:

"They have with united voice appointed you to the high station you possess. The Supreme Director of all events hath caused a wonderful union of hearts and counsels to subsist among us. Now, therefore, be strong and very courageous. May the *God* of the *Armies* of Israel shower down the blessings of his divine providence on you; give you wisdom and fortitude; cover your head in the day of battle and danger; add success; convince our enemies of their mistaken measures; and that all their attempts to deprive these Colonies of their inestimable constitutional rights and liberties are injurious and vain."

Thus the Governor at the age of sixty-five writes to the Commander in Chief of the age of forty-three. There is little or no doubt that Washington had been present at the session of Congress where by unanimous order that body expressed to Governor Trumbull "the high sense they have of [his] your important services to the United Colonies at this important crisis." To his letter of congratulation Washington replies, thanking him, and adding: "As the cause of our common country calls us both to active and dangerous duty, I trust that Divine Providence, which wisely orders the affairs of men, will enable us to discharge it with fidelity and success. The uncorrupted choice of a brave and free people had raised you to deserved eminence.

That the blessing of health, and the still greater blessings of long continuing to govern such a people may be yours is the sincere wish, Sir, of your<sup>s</sup> etc.

Regarding the dissatisfaction of General Spencer and others with appointments by the Continental Congress he writes, and there is no doubt that Trumbull agrees with him:

“As the Army is upon a general establishment, their right to supersede and contract a Provincial one must be unquestionable, and in such a cause I should hope every post would be deemed honourable which gave a man an opportunity to serve his country.”

From this time forward, the correspondence begins to be quite active. Powder is needed, and supplied from Connecticut. The Middletown lead mines are exploited as a source of supply for bullets, and the stations and marches of newly raised levies of troops are designated. At first it seemed best to retain these troops in Connecticut, where their drill and organization could be perfected, and where they could be ordered to repel any advance of the enemy on New York, which then appeared to be threatened.

On the fifth of September Trumbull wrote to Washington in reply to his letter of the second informing him of the apparent need of these troops to protect the coast towns of Connecticut, and explaining that, for this reason, he was detaining them for a time. Washington's letter of the second had referred to the danger from the British fleet, which, however, he considered as past, and had positively

directed that the new levies be sent forward immediately to fill the place of troops then destined for Canada.

The letter of Trumbull in reply appears to have led to the only shadow of a misunderstanding which occurred between him and Washington during their long and active correspondence. Washington sent on the eighth a peremptory order to Trumbull to send these troops forward, without regard to the movements of the enemy, informing him that the reasons for detaining them in Connecticut no longer existed, and that they were needed to fill the places of other continentals who were to leave in two days from that time. He also informs Trumbull that "by a resolution of Congress the troops on the Continental establishment were not to be employed for the defence of the coasts, or of any particular province, the militia being deemed competent for that service."

Trumbull's sensitiveness to real or supposed affront is manifested in his reply, in which, after explaining the delay in receiving the letter, and speaking of stationing the troops on the Connecticut coast by Washington's earlier orders he adds:

"I am surprised that mine of the 5th inst. was not received, or not judged worthy of notice, as no mention is made of it.

"Stonington has been attacked, and severely cannonaded, but by Divine Providence marvelously protected.

"New London and Norwich are still so menaced by the ministerial ships and troops, that the militia

cannot be thought sufficient for their security, and it is necessary to throw up some intrenchments. We are obliged actually to raise more men for their security, and for the towns of New Haven and Lyme. I hoped some of the new levies might have been left here till these dangers here were over, without injury to your operations. I own that it must be left to your judgment. Yet it would have given me pleasure to have been acquainted that you did consider it. I thank Divine Providence and you for this early warning to great care and watchfulness, that so the union of the colonies may be settled on a permanent and happy basis.

"I have before me your more acceptable letter of the 9th instant. The necessities of the Colony to supply our two armed vessels, to furnish the men necessarily raised for the defence of our seaports and coasts, and to raise the lead ore, which appears very promising, prevent our being able to spare more than half a ton [of powder], which is ordered forward with expedition. Before the necessity for raising more men appeared, we intended to send a ton.

"You may depend on our utmost exertions for the defence and security of the constitutional rights and liberty of the Colonies, and of our own in particular. None has shown greater forwardness, and thereby rendered itself more the object of ministerial vengeance.

"I am, with great esteem and regard for your personal character," etc.

To this letter Washington replies:

“Cambridge, 21 September, 1775.

“Sir,

“It gives me real concern to observe by yours of the 15th instant, that you should think it necessary to distinguish between my personal and public character, and confine your esteem to the former. Upon a reperusal of mine of the 8th instant, I cannot think the construction you have made one;<sup>1</sup> and unless it was that I should have hoped that the respect I really have, and which I flattered myself I had manifested to you, would have called for the most favorable. In the disposition of the Continental troops, I have long been sensible that it would be impossible to please, not individuals merely, but particular provinces, whose partial necessities would occasionally call for assistance. . . . You may be assured, Sir, nothing was intended that might be construed into disrespect; and at so interesting a period, nothing less ought to disturb the harmony so necessary for the happy success of our public operations.

“The omission of acknowledging, in precise terms, the receipt of your favor of the 5th instant was purely accidental. The subject was not so new to me as to require long consideration. I had had occasion fully to deliberate upon it, in consequence of applications for troops from Cape Ann, Machias, New Hampshire and Long Island, where the same necessity was as strongly pleaded, and, in the last two instances, the most peremptory orders were neces-

<sup>1</sup> Sparks gives this sentence in the following words: “I cannot think it bears the construction you have put upon it”, which is probably not an authentic copy from the original.



sary to prevent the troops from being detained. I foresaw the same difficulty here. I am by no means insensible to the situation of the people on the coast. I wish I could extend protection to all; but the numerous detachments necessary to remedy the evil, would amount to a dissolution of the army, or make the most important operations of the campaign depend upon the piratical expeditions of two or three men-of-war and transports.

"The spirit and zeal of the colony of Connecticut are unquestionable; and whatever may be the hostile intentions of the men-of-war, I hope their utmost efforts can do little more than alarm the coast.

"I am, with great esteem and regard for both your personal and public character, Sir", etc.

Trumbull's reply assures Washington that the unpleasant episode is ended, and that he is "persuaded that no such difficulty will any more happen." He deprecates jealousies and disputes between the colonies, and shows, as he has repeatedly shown, his earnest desire to promote the welfare of their common cause.

The result of this episode shows clearly, in the light of future correspondence, that these two men, on whom so much depended, understood each other fully from this time forward, and worked long and earnestly together in perfect confidence and harmony. The early days of the organization of the Continental Army were days fraught with difficulties which it is sometimes hard to understand at this distance of time. As an example of these

difficulties, we have seen how Trumbull and his Council appeased General Spencer, and later, in the broad-minded spirit of true patriotism, how Trumbull and Washington quickly cleared away the only and slight cloud of misunderstanding which ever came between them.

The time had now come when the Tories or Loyalists were regarded as internal foes. That war had begun there could be no doubt. In November of this momentous year it happened that the Governor's native colony undertook the suppression of the Tory press of James Rivington of New York, whose utterances through his *Gazette* found wide circulation and ready sympathy among the Tories in that city and the vicinity. The expedition for silencing this publication was planned by Isaac Sears, of New York, who recruited a force of some eighty men in New Haven and the vicinity for the purpose. Incidentally, they captured at Westchester the Reverend (afterwards Bishop) Samuel Seabury, Judge Jonathan Fowler and "Lord" Nathaniel Underhill. At Mamaroneck they burned a small British sloop, and on the following day proceeded to New York, where they drew up with fixed bayonets at Rivington's printing house, and seized his types and other printing materials, which rather radical censorship of his press prevented him from making further issue of his mischievous publications for nearly two years.

The General Committee of the City and County of New York found its dignity rather insulted by these violent proceedings, and addressed a letter

to Governor Trumbull requesting that Rivington's property be returned to the Chairman of this General Committee. The Governor's previous experience in the case of the Tory, Francis Green of Boston, appears to have stood him in good stead in this instance. Solemn as was the good Governor's face under the weighty cares and responsibilities of the time, it is difficult to imagine how he could have penned his decorous and courteous reply without at least a twinkle in those calm eyes, if not some muscular contractions suggestive of a chuckle. "The proper resort for a private injury," he replies, "must be to the courts of law, which are the only jurisdictions that can take notice of violences of this kind." He also calls the attention of the General Committee to the fact that Sears is a respectable member of their own city and congress, and is therefore amenable to their jurisdiction alone. The Governor's correspondents had already gravely acted on this suggestion by citing Sears and others to appear before the Committee "to answer for their conduct in entering the City this day [November 23d] with a number of Horse, in a hostile manner", which, with true Dutch dignity, the mover of the summons asserts that he considers "a breach of the Association."

History is silent regarding Sears's obedience to this summons. There is certainly no reason to believe that Rivington's types were ever returned to him; for, until the British occupied New York, and for some time later, his *Gazette* was conspicuous by its absence from the publications of the day.

The year 1775 closed with a very unhappy military experience for Connecticut which gave the Governor much concern, even though it bore no serious results. The Connecticut troops had enlisted in May and June for six months, and, as Washington writes, under date of December second, "they were requested and ordered to remain, as the time of most of them would not be out until the 10th, when they would be relieved." Some of these men, however, left for their homes without obtaining a regular discharge. Their officers had, as they supposed, persuaded them to wait until new recruits could fill their places, and had represented to Washington that the men would remain. The men who left thus summarily met with only scorn and ridicule on their way home and on their arrival, and were only too glad to hide their faces or return to camp. Washington, in his letter of the second, speaks of them as deserters, the Council of Safety uses the same term, but declines to deal with them as such, owing to the critical state of the times and the immediate need for new recruits.

The Governor writes to Washington expressing "grief, surprise and indignation" at the conduct of these men, which he can only excuse by a custom of the French war by which soldiers were considered free to leave the service when their terms of enlistment expired. He asks for any suggestions or even commands from Washington regarding these men, and closes by saying:

"Your candor and goodness will suggest to your consideration that the conduct of our troops is not

a rule whereby to judge of the temper and spirit of our Colony.”

Washington declines to offer any suggestion to the Governor regarding this disagreeable affair, which, though it created much concern and indignation at the time, appears to have been due to only a small number of men. At a later date, the General Assembly voted, in some instances, full pay to men who left the army at this time in the belief that they had a right to do so.

## CHAPTER XVI

THE CHILDREN OF THE FAMILY — JOSEPH, THE COMMISSARY GENERAL — HIS EARLY DEATH — JONATHAN AND HIS DISTINGUISHED SERVICES — DAVID, THE HOME WORKER — JOHN, THE SOLDIER AND ARTIST — FAITH AND HER SAD DEATH — MARY AND HER PATRIOTIC HUSBAND

UNDER the home influences by which they were surrounded, it naturally follows that Governor Trumbull's four sons became actively engaged in the service of their country, from the beginning of the Revolution, and that his two daughters became the wives of two distinguished patriots.

The eldest son, Joseph, had barely time to begin his duties in the field as Commissary General of Connecticut when the attention of Washington was drawn to the need of a Commissary General for the Continental Army. His keen insight found Connecticut better equipped in her commissariat than any of the other colonies, and on the tenth of July, he writes, in his first letter from Cambridge to the Continental Congress:

"I esteem it, therefore, my duty to represent the inconvenience which must unavoidably ensue from a dependence on a number of persons for supplies, and submit it to the consideration of the Congress, whether the publick service will not be

best promoted by appointing a Commissary-General for these purposes. We have a striking instance of the preference of such a mode in the establishment of *Connecticut*, as their Troops are extremely well furnished under the direction of Mr. *Trumbull*, and he has at different times assisted others with various articles. Should my sentiments happily coincide with those of your Honours on this subject, I beg leave to recommend Mr. *Trumbull* as a very proper person for this department."

This recommendation appears to have been made entirely on Washington's observation of Joseph Trumbull's personal merits. The appointment was immediately made by Congress, and the new Commissary General, whose entire life seems to have been a struggle against misfortunes and difficulties, commenced a career whose cares, worries and fatigues brought him to an early grave in three years. The record of the difficulties he encountered is too long to tell here, and has never been fully told.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty of buying provisions without money; the reconciling of jealousies among various other commissaries, some appointed by Congress, and others by their own colonies; the difficulties of transportation of supplies; the interference of Congress in the organization of the department, — all these and many more troubles confronted him from the beginning to the end of his brief career. The inscription on his tombstone in Lebanon truly recites

<sup>1</sup> In "New London County Historical Society's Records and Papers", vol. 2, p. 329, will be found a brief sketch of the career of the first Commissary General.

the "he fell a victim" to the "perpetual cares and fatigues" of his office. His toilsome career was inconspicuous and soon forgotten, but he died for his country as truly and heroically as the soldier who falls in the forefront of battle. His death at the age of forty-two proved to be one of his father's saddest losses for his country's cause.

The life of Jonathan Trumbull, Junior, the next son, resulted in more distinguished public services and offices than that of any of his brothers. His first appointment was that of Deputy Paymaster-general for the Northern Department of the Continental Army, a position which he held from July 28, 1775, until the death of his brother Joseph in 1778. In November of that year he was appointed Comptroller of the Treasury of the United States, which, under Roger Sherman's plan of organization, placed him at the head of this department. In 1780, he was appointed first aide and secretary to Washington, a position which he held until the close of the war. He afterwards held the positions of Representative and Senator from Connecticut in the Congress of the United States, from 1789 to 1796, when he resigned his senatorship to take the position of Deputy Governor of his native State, becoming Governor in 1798, and remaining in this office until his death in 1809.

The third son, David, performed services for his country which are less conspicuous in the public records, but were continuous and arduous, from the beginning to the end of the war. It fell to his lot to remain at home, where he appears to have been



most needed in the absence of his brothers; but as early as in August, 1775, we find that he is credited with "going express three times to the army" to superintend the transportation of provisions and to deliver despatches. He was active also in collecting arms and ammunition, and succeeded in having a large number of old muskets repaired and made serviceable — a much more important service in the days of the Revolution than it might be now. He was also employed in securing provisions under contract both for the commissary and quartermasters' departments. He has left behind him a mass of accounts and correspondence which show, to some extent, the nature and constancy of his services.<sup>1</sup>

The career of the youngest son, John, is described in full in his autobiography and in other publications drawn from that work. It was a career more striking and perhaps more brilliant than that of any of his brothers, due to the spirited character of the man, and to his inborn taste for art. He himself forbids us to call this genius, for he says, "I am disposed to doubt the existence of such a principle in the human mind." However this may be, he is remembered to-day, principally if not solely, as a pioneer in American art.

His taste for drawing developed at so early an age, that during his college course it gave much concern to President William Kneeland of Harvard. In a letter to Governor Trumbull he says, after speaking highly of the young man: "I find he has a natural

<sup>1</sup> Manuscript collections of the Connecticut Historical Society.

talent for limning. As a knowledge of that art will probably be of no use to him, I submit to your consideration whether it would not be best to endeavor to give him a turn to the study of perspective, the knowledge of which will at least be a genteel accomplishment, and may be greatly useful in future life."

To this the Governor readily assents, having already formed and expressed to his son a similar opinion. And even after the Revolution was over, and the young man is urged by his father to take up the study and practice of law, the father listens to his arguments for the life of an artist and with his characteristic grave humor reminds him that "Connecticut is not Athens",—and never again attempts to influence the choice of his career.

He commenced his military life as an aide to General Joseph Spencer in the First Regiment of Connecticut troops, which, as he tells us, "started into view as by magic, and was on its march for Boston before the 1st of May" [1775]. Washington's attention is attracted to him from a plan of the enemy's works, which—thanks to his talent for drawing—he had made by stealth as opportunity offered. He is appointed second aide to the Commander in Chief, and remains with the army until after the evacuation of Boston, which event he describes as an eye-witness. In June, 1776, he is promoted to the position of adjutant to General Horatio Gates, and performs some important service in the Northern Department, especially in showing that an enemy occupying Mount

Defiance could render Fort Ticonderoga untenable, a fact which he proved by experiment, and General Burgoyne by actual practice, in a way to cause the speedy evacuation of Ticonderoga by St. Clair.

Young Trumbull had been appointed adjutant with the rank of colonel by General Gates, who was authorized to make the appointment. Congress was slow in issuing the commission, and when it reached the young officer it was found to be dated some three months later than the appointment by Gates. This he regarded as "an insuperable bar" to accepting it, and he returned the commission in a curt letter to the Honorable John Hancock, President of Congress, informing him that "a soldier's honor forbids the idea of giving up the least pretension to rank." This terminated his regular connection with the army, although he volunteered in the following year as an aide in the unsuccessful attempt to regain Newport, Rhode Island, from the British. Judging from his father's frequently expressed sentiments in similar cases, we must conclude that he did not regard his young son of twenty-one as justified in his resignation.

This decision of the spirited young man left him free to resume the study and practice of his favorite art of painting, into which he entered with zeal. Finding but little encouragement and few advantages for perfecting himself in the art in Lebanon, or even in Boston, he went in 1780 to London, with letters of introduction to Benjamin West, under whose auspices he was much helped and encouraged in the pursuit of his chosen profession.

With varying fortunes and through interruptions and obstacles, he continued his career to the close of his long life. Foremost among his numerous works are his paintings representing the men and scenes of the American Revolution, some of which are in the Capitol at Washington, and others, to a large number, in the Yale Art Gallery. His work is recognized to-day as an important contribution to American art.

The early death of Faith, the eldest daughter of Governor Trumbull, forms one of the saddest features of the family history. In May, 1766, she married Colonel (afterwards General) Jedediah Huntington, who served faithfully and with distinction through the entire war. At the time of the battle of Bunker Hill she was visiting the army near Boston, with a party of young friends, awaiting the arrival of her husband, whose regiment was then on its march. The consequences and scenes of the battle so alarmed her sensitive nature, through solicitude for the fate of her husband and brothers, that she became deranged, in which condition she lingered with some hopes of recovery until the following November, when, in one of her more acute attacks, she committed suicide. This was indeed a sad blow to her husband and family, and the letters of Governor Trumbull to his bereaved son-in-law show the affection in which he held her, and his grief at her loss in these trying times. On February 26, 1776, he writes:

“The world, after all, is a little pitiful thing, not performing any one promise it makes us, and every

day taking away and annulling the joys of the past. A few days ago I had a dear affectionate daughter Faithy. Alas! she is no more with us. Let us comfort one another, and if possible study to add as much goodness, love, and friendship to each other as death has deprived us of in her."

Mary, the Governor's fourth child and youngest daughter, married William Williams, a steadfast and noted patriot, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was a man of radical views, both in politics and religion, a firm believer in the justice of his country's cause, and fully convinced that any disaster to our arms could be attributed to the wrathful punishments of the Supreme Ruler, as the following quotation from his letter of September 20, 1776, to his father-in-law regarding the evacuation of New York by the Americans will show:

"These Events, however signal advantage gained by our oppressors, and the distress to which our Army and Country are and must be subjected in consequence of them, are loud speaking Testimonies of the Displeasure and Anger of Almighty God against a sinful People, louder than Sevenfold Thunder. Is it possible that the most obdurate and stupid of the Children of America should not hear and tremble?"

As an instance of his outspoken patriotism, it is recorded of him that when he spoke of having incurred the penalty of hanging by signing the Declaration of Independence, one of his neighbors replied that no such penalty was in store for him,

as he had not entered the service of his country. "Then, sir," said Williams, "you deserve to be hanged for not doing your duty."

There is no doubt that the married life of William Williams and Mary Trumbull was a happy one, for they were in accord on the great questions of the day, and contributed much to the comfort of their parents in Lebanon, which was their lifelong place of residence.

Meantime, it should be remembered that during nearly all of the dark days of the Revolution, the faithful, devoted mother was at her post in Lebanon, with her brave, inspiring farewells to her sons who had gone to the front, her kind and friendly aid to her neighbors, and her sympathetic and helpful share in the weighty burden of cares and responsibilities under which her husband labored. Spared to him through forty-five years of married life, she did not live to rejoice with him in the final triumph of the cause to which he had devoted himself, but lived to share in its sternest and hardest tasks with him, as his helpmeet and comfort.

Thus it was that Governor Trumbull became the head of a family of stanch patriots, every one of whom contributed materially to the cause of American liberty and independence. It seems best to group them here, though their careers are, to a great extent, connected with the events which we are still briefly to consider.

## CHAPTER XVII

RENEWED CALLS FOR TROOPS — THE NEW YORK  
EXPEDITION — WASHINGTON'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS —  
MORE TROOPS — THE GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION —  
INDEPENDENCE — GOVERNOR FRANKLIN A PRISONER  
— ROW-GALLEYS SENT TO NEW YORK

THE year 1776 opened with calls for seven regiments from Connecticut; and within a fortnight we find Governor Trumbull issuing four different proclamations for recruiting these regiments. Of these, two were wanted for special service in New York, under General Charles Lee; one for Canada, and four for the camp near Boston. These regiments were promptly furnished by reënlistments and new enlistments, five of the six which were raised in the previous April being reorganized at once.

The special service of the two newly raised regiments for New York is worthy of passing notice, if only to show the promptness with which they were raised, and the contributory incompetence of the Continental Congress and General Charles Lee in making their services of little or no avail. The special service for which they were destined was the military occupation of New York. Lee, in whom there was so much misplaced confidence at the time, represented to Washington and to Governor Trumbull the need of an attack upon the

Tories of Long Island, and of formal possession of New York City, as imperative. Washington's good judgment led him to consult John Adams as to the jurisdiction of the Commander in Chief in the matter, and the advisability of the expedition. Fortified by Adams' plainly expressed views, he proceeded to call on Governor Trumbull, early in January of this year, for two regiments, while the Continental Congress called on New Jersey for minute men, and ordered an attack on the Tories of Long Island. Colonel Waterbury's Connecticut regiment, which appeared promptly, was ordered by Congress to Oyster Bay to coöperate with New Jersey troops for this expedition, but the order was countermanded almost as soon as given, and was understood by Lee, if he reports himself truly, to be an order for this regiment to disband. But, Lee reports to Washington, "Governor Trumbull, like a man of sense and spirit, ordered it to be re-assembled." Waterbury then marched his regiment to New York, where he found some difficulty in getting winter quarters, which he rather peremptorily occupied.

And as if the Continental Congress had not given the Governor and Council trouble enough, Lee proceeds to send home the other Connecticut regiment — Colonel Andrew Ward's — because, forsooth, he understood that the Provincial Congress of New York had authority over this regiment which superseded his own. No sooner had Colonel Ward with his regiment reached the disbanding point than Lee writes to Governor Trumbull to



reorganize it if disbanded and send it forward at once, the little misunderstanding regarding the authority of the Provincial Congress of New York having been satisfactorily arranged or explained away by a committee from the Continental Congress which arrived on the scene.

The principal recorded result of the whole expedition appears to have been that Lee was given an opportunity to indulge in gasconading to an extent which must have satisfied even him for the time being, and that he was enabled to pose as a hero by being borne on a litter from Stamford to New York while suffering from an attack of gout. Some fortifications were built about the city and its approaches by his direction, and the Connecticut regiments had some share in the work, but the serious work in New York for Connecticut and other troops was to come, as events proved, seven months later.

The promptness of Connecticut in meeting the requests of Washington for men, through his correspondence with Governor Trumbull, is best shown by the following extract from a letter written by Washington on January 20, 1776. Speaking of the regiment furnished by Connecticut for service in Canada, he says:

“The early attention which you and your honourable Council have paid to this important business, has anticipated my requisition and claims, in a particular manner, the thanks of every well-wishing *American*.”

That it was not only in furnishing men but in furnishing materials that Connecticut was active,

may be learned from a few more extracts from Washington's letters. All requests and requisitions which he made upon Connecticut were addressed to Governor Trumbull, while in the case of other colonies such requests were usually addressed to their general assemblies, or provincial congresses.

Writing to Governor Trumbull of the lack of powder for the army before Boston, which, with the lack of men, rendered an aggressive movement unwise, Washington says:

"This matter is mentioned to you in confidence. Your zeal, activity and attachment to the cause, renders it unnecessary to conceal it from you. Our real stock of powder, which, after furnishing the Militia, (unfortunately coming in without, and will require upwards of fifty barrels,) and completing our other troops to twenty-four rounds a man, (which are less, by one-half, than the Regulars have,) and having a few rounds of cannon-cartidges fitted for immediate use, will leave us not more than one hundred barrels in store for the greatest emergency. . . ."

Here again Washington finds that Governor Trumbull has anticipated his wants, for three days later he writes to the Governor:

"I have just received a letter from J. Huntington, Esq., with the agreeable news of his having forwarded two tons of powder to this camp, by your order. Accept, sir, of my thanks for this seasonable supply."

The bloodless victory of the following March, resulting in the evacuation of Boston by the British,

called for less of Washington's scant supply of powder than was expected; nevertheless, quite a quantity of Connecticut powder must have been burned in the frequent cannonades which disguised the real movements of the Continental Army under the superb generalship of Washington. Of Trumbull's rejoicing in this victory — the last of such rejoicing in this memorable year — we learn by the following extracts from his letter of March twenty-fifth to Washington:

"I do most heartily congratulate you on your success, that, after a long, incessant, and persevering fatigue, you have happily caused our enemies to evacuate the town of Boston, to leave that strong fortress they built when they trampled on the properties of the inhabitants of that distressed town, profaned the sacred places dedicated to divine worship and service, and designed the ruin of the lives, properties, and liberties of our whole country. The lustre of the British arms is tarnished. By a shameful and ignominious retreat they have lost their honour, — indeed, none could be maintained or gained in so wicked and scandalous a cause."

From Boston the scene of military operations soon changes to New York, and after some correspondence with Trumbull, resulting in the sending of two regiments of Connecticut militia to the new field of operations, Washington himself goes to this field, by way of Norwich, Connecticut. In this town the two patriots meet on the thirteenth of April at the house of General Jabez Huntington, and here they discuss matters of importance re-

garding the coming campaign. Lead in the form of bullets is wanted from the Middletown mines, arms repaired under the direction of the Governor's son David are urgently needed, and more than all, men are needed to make up the deficiencies in the Continental Army from which men had been quite freely drawn to serve in the northern campaign. All these matters receive the careful and prompt attention of the Governor and his Council, and soon afterwards the May session of the General Assembly of Connecticut convenes.

This session is a memorable one if only for the reason that its record omits the time-honored Latin heading designating the year of the reign of the sovereign of Great Britain, whose arms no longer embellish the public acts of the session. His Majesty's name no longer appears upon the legal writs issued from this time forth, but in its stead appears the authority of the Governor and Company of the Colony of Connecticut, soon to be called the State of Connecticut.

No respite is given the busy Governor during the short interval between the regular May session of this year and the special session which he called on the fourteenth of the following June. During this interval the Council of Safety remains at Hartford holding frequent meetings to audit accounts, to provide for naval affairs, and to discuss various matters of public interest. Naval affairs especially occupy much of the time and attention of the Council. Privateers are fitted out, the building of a man-of-war is being hurried forward at Say-

brook, and the row-galleys built at Norwich and Haddam are christened respectively the *Shark* and the *Crane*, and made ready for the service to which in a few months they will be called on the Hudson River.

The special June session of the General Assembly lost no time in instructing the Connecticut delegates to the Continental Congress to declare for independence. On the first day of the session, after a preamble of no uncertain sound, it was

*“Resolved unanimously by this Assembly, That the Delegates of this Colony in General Congress be and they are hereby instructed to propose to that respectable body, to declare the United States, absolved from all allegiance to the King of Great Britain, and to give the assent of this Colony to such declaration when they shall judge it expedient and best, and to whatever measures may be thought proper and necessary by the Congress for forming foreign alliances, or any plan of operation for necessary and mutual defence. . . .”*

Immediately following this resolve, is an act for raising two battalions to join the Continental Army in Canada, and for raising seven battalions for New York, showing, as usual, that deeds, not words, constituted the motto of Connecticut under the inspiration of her Governor. To give force to these acts, a proclamation was issued on the eighteenth of June which, by no great straining of definition, has been called Connecticut's Declaration of Independence, and which, singularly enough, did not reappear in print from the time when it was pub-

lished as a broadside in 1776 until 1890, when it was published in the Colonial Records of Connecticut by Doctor Charles J. Hoadley. It seems well to give it in full here as a specimen of one of the most urgent and, for the time, impressive of the Governor's proclamations which have been preserved to us:

“By the Honorable Jonathan Trumbull Esq; Governor and Commander in Chief of the *English Colony of Connecticut in New England*.

#### “A PROCLAMATION

“The Race of Mankind was made in a State of Innocence and Freedom, subjected only to the laws of GOD THE CREATOR, and through his rich Goodness, designed for virtuous Liberty and Happiness here and forever; and when moral Evil was introduced into the World, and Man had corrupted his ways before GOD, Vice and Iniquity came in like a Flood, and Mankind became exposed, and a prey to the Violence, Injustice and Oppression of one another. God, in his great Mercy, inclined his People to form themselves into Society, and to set up and establish civil Government for the Protection and Security of their Lives and Properties from the Invasion of wicked Men: But through Pride and Ambition, the Kings and Princes of the World, appointed by the People the Guardians of their Lives and Liberties, early and almost universally degenerated into Tyrants, and by Fraud or Force betrayed and wrested out of their Hands the very Rights and Properties they were appointed to protect and

defend. But a small part of the Human Race maintained and enjoyed any tolerable degree of Freedom. Among these happy Few the Nation of *Great Britain* was distinguished, by a Constitution of Government wisely framed and modelled, to support the Dignity and Power of the Prince, for the protection of the Rights of the People; and under which that Country in long Succession, enjoyed great Tranquility and Peace, though not unattended with repeated and powerful Efforts, by many of it's haughty Kings, to destroy the constitutional Rights of the People, and establish arbitrary Power and Dominion. In one of those convulsive struggles, our Forefathers having suffered in that, their native Country, great and variety of Injustice and Oppression, left their dear Connections and Enjoyments, and fled to this then inhospitable Land, to secure a lasting Retreat from civil and religious Tyranny.

“The GOD of Heaven favored and prospered their Undertaking — made Room for their Settlement — increased and multiplied them to a very numerous People, and inclined succeeding King's to indulge them and their Children for many Years, the unmolested Enjoyment of the Freedom and Liberty they fled to inherit: But, an unnatural King has risen up — violated his sacred Obligations, and by the Advice of evil Counsellors, attempted to wrest from us, their Children, the sacred Rights we justly claim, and which have been ratified and established by solemn Compact with, and recognized by, his Predecessors and Fathers, King's of

Great Britain — laid upon us Burdens too heavy and grievous to be born, and issued many cruel and oppressive Edicts, depriving us of our natural, lawful, and most important Rights, and subjecting us to the absolute Power and Control of himself, and the *British* Legislature, against which we have sought Relief by humble, earnest and dutiful Complaints and Petitions: But instead of obtaining Redress, our Petitions have been treated with Scorn and Contempt, and fresh Injuries heaped upon us, while hostile Armies and Ships are sent to destroy and lay waste our Country. In this distressing Dilemma, having no Alternative but absolute Slavery, or successful Resistance; this, and the United American Colonies, have been constrained by the over-ruling Laws of Self-Preservation, to take up Arms for the Defence of all that is sacred and dear to Freemen, and make their solemn Appeal to Heaven for the Justice of their Cause, and resist Force by Force.

“GOD ALMIGHTY has been pleased, of his infinite Mercy, to succeed our Attempts, and give us many Instances of signal Success and Deliverance; but the Wrath of the King is still increasing, and not content with before employing all the Force which can be sent from his own Kingdom to execute his cruel Purposes, has procured, and is sending all the Mercenaries he can obtain from foreign Countries, to assist in extirpating the Rights of *America*, and with their’s, almost all the Liberty remaining among Mankind.

“In this most critical and alarming Situation,



this, and all the Colonies, are called upon, and earnestly pressed, by the Honorable CONGRESS of the *American* Colonies, united for mutual Defence, to raise a large additional Number of their Militia and able Men, to be furnished and equipped with all possible Expedition, for defence against the soon expected Attack and Invasion of those who are our Enemies without a Cause. In chearful Compliance with which Request, and urged by Motives the most cogent and important that can affect the human Mind, the General Assembly of this Colony have freely and unanimously agreed and resolved, that upwards of Seven Thousand able and effective Men be immediately raised, furnished and equipped, for the great and interesting Purposes aforesaid. And not Desirous that any should go to a Warfare at their own Charges, (though equally interested with others) for Defence of the great and all-important Cause for which we are engaged, have granted large and liberal Pay and Encouragements, to all who shall voluntarily undertake for the Defence of themselves and their Country, as by their Acts may appear.

“I DO THEREFORE, by and with the Advice of the Council, and at the desire of the Representatives in General Court assembled, issue this PROCLAMATION, and make the solemn Appeal of said Assembly to the Virtue and public Spirit of the good People of this Colony. Affairs are hastening fast to a Crisis, and the approaching Campaign will, in all Probability, determine forever the fate of *America*. If this should be successful on our

Side, there is little to fear on Account of any other. Be exhorted to rise, therefore, to superior Exertions on this great Occasion; and let all that are able and necessary, shew themselves ready in Behalf of their injured and oppressed Country, and come forth to the Help of the LORD against the Mighty, and convince the unrelenting Tyrant of *Britain* that they are resolved to be FREE. Let them step forth to defend their Wives, their little Ones, their Liberty, and everything they hold sacred and dear, to defend the cause of their Country, their Religion and their GOD. Let every one to the utmost of their Power, lend a helping Hand to promote and forward a Design on which the Salvation of *America* now evidently depends. Nor need any be dismayed: the Cause is certainly a just and glorious one. GOD is able to save us in such Way and Manner as he pleases, and to humble our proud Oppressors. The Cause is that of Truth and Justice: he has already shown his Power in our behalf, and for the Destruction of many of our Enemies. *Our Fathers trusted in him and were delivered.* Let us all repent, and thoroughly amend our Ways, and turn to him, put all our Trust and Confidence in him — in his Name go forth, and in his Name set up our Banners, and he will save us with temporal and eternal Salvation. And while our Armies are abroad, jeoparding their Lives in the high Places of the Field, let all who remain at Home, cry mightily to GOD for the Protection of his Providence, to shield and defend their lives from Death, and to crown them with Victory and Success. And in the

Name of the said General Assembly, I do hereby earnestly recommend it to all, both Ministers and People, frequently to meet together for social Prayer to ALMIGHTY GOD, for the out-pouring of his blessed Spirit upon this guilty Land — that he would awaken his People to Righteousness and Repentance — bless our Councils — prosper our Arms, and succeed the measures using for our necessary Self-Defence — disappoint the evil and cruel Devices of our Enemies — preserve our precious Rights and Liberties — lengthen out our Tranquility, and make us a People of his Praise, and blessed of the LORD, as long as the Sun and Moon shall endure.

AND all the Ministers of the Gospel in this Colony, are directed and desired to publish this Proclamation in their several Churches and Congregations, and to enforce the Exhortations thereof by their own pious Example and public Instructions.

“GIVEN *under my hand, at the Council Chamber in Hartford, the 18th day of June, Anno Domini 1776.*

“JONATHAN TRUMBULL.”

On the twelfth of the following July the news of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence was officially received by the Council of Safety. It was “largely discoursed” by that body, but it was decided to postpone action regarding it until the next regular session of the General Assembly. The Governor evidently took its adoption as a matter of course, after the resolutions adopted regarding it at the May session, and the course pur-

sued by that session in ignoring the sovereign of England for the first time. He therefore did not see fit to call an extra session simply for proclaiming officially something which had been already practically proclaimed and adopted.

This same Fourth of July, 1776, was made memorable to the Governor and Council of Safety by the appearance before them of Governor William Franklin of New Jersey, who had been sent by the Continental Congress "under guard to Governor Trumbull, who is desired to take his parole; and if Mr. Wm. Franklin refuse to give his parole, that Governor Trumbull be desired to treat him agreeable to the resolutions of Congress respecting prisoners." He had been described by the Convention of New Jersey as "a virulent enemy to this country", and after several changes of residence under parole, he was at last placed in confinement, owing to his attempts to circulate Lord Howe's olive-branch proclamations and various similar proceedings. After an enforced residence in Connecticut for about two years, he was at last exchanged; and from the time of his exchange he ceased to be a political factor in the American Revolution, warned, no doubt, by his experience in Connecticut.

Meantime, the seven battalions for New York are being raised and equipped under the inspiration of the Governor's proclamation, and seven well organized regiments of Connecticut militia are sent to New York for service under Washington, and at his special request. It is a busy time, too, in naval affairs. The row-galleys *Whiting* and *Crane*,

soon to be followed by the *Shark*, are sent to New York to make trouble for the British fleet on the Hudson. Captain Harding, with his brig *Defence*, reports sundry prizes taken to Boston to avoid recapture; and Long Island Sound is as thoroughly patrolled as possible by the odd craft of the improvised Connecticut navy, resulting in the capture of quantities of provisions intended for the enemy, all of which is faithfully reported by the Governor to his constant correspondent, Washington. So important had this matter become, both from the capture of merchant vessels by the enemy, and the illicit trade carried on by "evil minded persons", that the Governor issued orders at this time for the detention of all vessels laden with provisions until proper examination could be made, or the Continental Congress or the provincial Congresses having jurisdiction should be notified of the hazard of capture by the enemy, and give their orders to the vessels under their control.

## CHAPTER XVIII

DARK DAYS — URGENT CALLS FOR TROOPS — TRUMBULL'S ACTIVE MEASURES — MILITIA REGIMENTS DESPATCHED TO NEW YORK — DEMANDS OF THE NORTHERN ARMY — TRUMBULL'S RELATIONS TO SCHUYLER — SUPPLIES AND MEN HURRIED FORWARD — SECTIONAL JEALOUSIES

FROM the time we are now considering, the darkest days of the American Revolution begin. The anxious patriots are looking forward with a solicitude which in the light of subsequent events it is difficult for us to understand, to the general engagement impending at New York. We have seen by the Governor's proclamation of June eighteenth that it was then believed that the coming campaign would "in all probability determine the fate of America." This belief was the result of correspondence with Washington and with Congress, a correspondence in which the urgent need of men was set forth in the most impressive terms.

Again the active exertions of the Governor in raising troops and forwarding them to the front anticipate Washington's urgent demands. His promptness and activity are best explained in his own words in a letter to Washington written on July 6, 1776:

“SIR: I wrote this day to the Continental Congress that the ancient laws of this Colony enable the Colonels of the Militia to call out their respective regiments upon any alarm, invasion, or appearance of the enemy, by sea or land, giving notice to the Captain-General or Commander-in-Chief for the time being, of the occasion thereof. This, with a general order to them to call out their regiments upon notice from General *Washington*, or the Commander-in-Chief for the time being, to march to his assistance, may supersede the necessity of any new regulation in respect to the Militia, at least until the next Assembly, as it is very inconvenient for them to come together at this busy season.”

In accordance with this “ancient law of the Colony” which the Governor fits to the occasion, he issues general orders to the commanding officers of the five Connecticut regiments stationed nearest to the New York border to hold themselves in readiness to move as *Washington* may direct. The regiments of Connecticut “Lighthorse” are also reported to be “moving on fast” towards New York, where upon their arrival it is found necessary to disband them, owing to the absence of forage and the unwillingness of the men and officers to serve without their horses.

Before *Washington* had received the letter informing him of the orders given to the five regiments of militia, he had, on the seventh of July, written Governor Trumbull, giving the latest intelligence received from the enemy, which showed that their force already assembled and daily expected would

be more formidable than it was at first supposed to be, and adding:

“The interests of America are now in the balance, and it behooves all attached to her sacred cause, and the rights of humanity, to hold forth their utmost and most speedy aid. I am convinced nothing will be wanting in your power to effect.”

Within a month from this time the situation became still more alarming. Washington writes to Governor Trumbull on the seventh of August that the British forces concentrating at New York by the most reliable accounts reached the number of thirty thousand, while the number of American soldiers fit for duty was 10,514 men, mostly raw troops, scattered over a distance of some fifteen miles.

To this alarming letter Trumbull replies:

“Your favor of the 7th instant by Mr. Root, and the intelligence it contains, has given me great concern and anxiety. The soon-expected strength of the enemy and the weakness of your army were equally unforeseen and surprising. . . .

“Immediately upon receipt of your letter I summoned my Council of Safety and ordered nine regiments of our militia, in addition to the five Western regiments, fourteen in the whole, to march without loss of time and join you, under the command of Oliver Wolcott, Esq., colonel of the Nineteenth Regiment, as their brigadier-general, who is appointed and commissioned to that office. These orders are accompanied with the most pressing recommendation of speedily carrying them into execution. . . .



“I have likewise proposed that companies of volunteers, consisting of able-bodied men not in the militia, should associate and march to your assistance under officers they should choose, and have promised them like wages and allowance of provisions, etc., as the Continental Army receive. Some such companies are formed, and expect more will be. Whatever their number may be, they will be ordered to join some one of our militia regiments, and submit themselves to the command of their field officers while they continue in service.

“Colonel Ward’s regiment is on the march to join. I am far from trusting merely in the justice of our cause; I consider that as a just ground to hope for the smiles of Heaven on our exertions, which ought to be the greatest in our power.”

From all the correspondence with Washington, it appears that twenty-one regiments of Connecticut militia were sent forward to New York, in addition to the Continental troops of the State already in the service. The old Connecticut hero, Putnam, is placed in command at the disastrous battle of Long Island, in which the Americans were outnumbered two to one. The services of Connecticut men in this battle, in the masterly retreat from Brooklyn Heights, and in the subsequent retreat through New York and New Jersey, were active and important. History cannot forget the brave Knowlton who fell at the head of his gallant band in the battle of Harlem Heights and the sacrifice of Nathan Hale will always form an example of the purest, self-forgetting patriotism which history records.

All this important and engrossing service formed, however, only a portion of the weighty cares and responsibilities under which the veteran Governor of Connecticut labored at this time. The demands which the northern army under General Schuyler was making upon him through the gloomy and anxious northern campaign of 1776 were constant and of vital importance. The enlistment of Connecticut men for this campaign was sadly impeded by the prevalence of smallpox in the northern army, and much of Trumbull's correspondence with Washington and Schuyler refers to the prevention of this scourge by the process of inoculation, and by separating the infected from the immunes and disinfected. Trumbull writes to Schuyler on the fifth of July of this year: "The smallpox in our northern army carries with it much greater dread than our enemies." He sends Doctor Ely to consult with Schuyler's doctors, and to report upon the real state of affairs, in the hope that one so well acquainted with the disease and its treatment may be able to reassure the timid on his return, and to advise means of protection in camp.

At this time the relations between Trumbull and Schuyler appear to be quite intimate. Ship carpenters are needed for the seemingly impossible task of building a navy from the forests of New York and Vermont, and are promptly sent forward from Connecticut upon Schuyler's request to the Governor. Axes are needed to fell the trees of these forests, and one thousand good axes "ground and helved" are sent from Connecticut within a month

from the date of Schuyler's letter asking for them. In this letter he says to Governor Trumbull:

"Your Honor's goodness, and the despatch with which everything comes from you, will expose you to much trouble, and many applications, but as I know where your consolation lies, I do not hesitate to beg your assistance on this occasion."

These axes doubtless did good service in felling the trees from which an improvised navy was built, and a year later, after the gallant resistance by this little navy under Arnold, at Lake Champlain, did equally good, or more efficient service, in felling the trees which reduced the speed of Burgoyne's advance to twenty miles in twenty days at a time when speed was his only salvation. Sailors are soon wanted for the improvised navy, and upon Schuyler's request Governor Trumbull commissions Captains Seth Warner, David Hawley and Frederick Chappell each to raise a company of seamen, at the same time asking Washington to allow some of these men to be taken from the Connecticut militia then in service in New York. The northern fleet on Lake Champlain is also further equipped with cannons and balls from the Salisbury furnace, whose operations Governor Trumbull and his Council are continually watching and directing. Sail cloth and cordage are also sent from Middletown under Governor Trumbull's supervision.

Not only in supplying materials, but in the use of his influence and diplomatic tact, are the Governor's services called into request. One of the greatest and most insidious difficulties with which

the chivalrous Schuyler had to contend was local jealousy. He occupied the unenviable position of a New York general commanding forces of which a large majority were from New England. They were suspicious of him, and were only too ready to believe any false reports regarding him which were spread abroad by his enemies and by the common enemy. The spirit of discord entered into the army, at first manifesting itself only by rumors and dissensions, but gradually gaining ground, as the schemer Gates appeared on the scene. On the thirteenth of July we find Schuyler writing to Governor Trumbull as follows:

“Numerous and formidable as our enemies are, I cannot despair of success against them, provided we are unanimous. I mention this because of the unhappy dissensions in the Northern Army, where some unfriendly or unthinking people have set up Colonial distinctions. I have always deprecated every attempt to divide us, by that or any other means; and when I was last at *Crown-Point*, I convened the commanding officer of every corps, and pointed out, in the most forcible manner I was capable of, the danger of such distinctions, and how much and how justly the enemy would exult to learn it. The goodness of your heart, my dear sir, and your zeal for our cause, will induce you to give me all the assistance in your power to eradicate this evil. But whilst I entreat you to recommend to the troops from your colony to cultivate harmony, I would not wish to be understood that they have been the promoters or principal supporters of the

unhappy dissensions; on the contrary, I have reason to believe them as little culpable as any."

To this letter Governor Trumbull replies on the thirty-first of July, as follows:

"It gives me great concern to hear that dissensions prevail in the Northern Army, and that they are inflamed and kept up by Colonial distinctions. I have, agreeable to your request, recommended to the troops from this Government to cultivate harmony and a good understanding with the troops from other States as well as among themselves, and have pressed it upon them with all the earnestness the nature and importance of the subject requires. I shall be very happy to find anything I have done, or can do, may contribute towards eradicating this evil."

Notwithstanding the Governor's good offices in the matter, the trouble continued. Reports were circulated throughout New England reflecting seriously on Schuyler's loyalty to the cause of his country, and causing him to write again to Governor Trumbull on the twentieth of August:

"I am informed that forces that went from hence to Connecticut are doing all in their power to increase the jealousies that so unjustly prevail against me in different parts of the country. Conscious of the rectitude of my conduct, I should pass by in silent contempt every infamous traduction, did I not apprehend that silence would be construed as a tacit avowal of my guilt. I have therefore entreated Congress for a minute inquiry into my conduct. . . ."

To this Governor Trumbull replies on the twenty-eighth of August:

“Your assiduous attention to the great concerns of the publick at this important period is, in the minds of the considerate, a most undissembled declaration of your hearty attachment to the interest of the *United States of America*. Whatever reports may have been spread by the disaffected, or opinions had by the mistaken or ill-informed, I hope neither your character nor the cause of our country will eventually suffer thereby. As to Tories, no very good offices to one in your place can be expected from them. I flatter myself that no misrepresentations of theirs will have credit enough in this State greatly to wound your character or prevent your usefulness. It requires the wisdom of a Solomon and the patience of a Job to endure traduction, or regard a slander with the contempt it deserves. I heartily wish the injury may not give too much anxiety to a mind possessed of a conscious rectitude of intention.”

The Governor's son Jonathan had already warned Schuyler that the false reports of treason, embezzlement, etc., had reached Connecticut, where, as his correspondents inform Trumbull, these reports did not have “their designed effect.” The veteran Putnam also writes that “the late reports were raised by people notoriously inimical to this country, and that it was done with a view of dividing us.” He expresses the confidence of himself and his colleagues in Schuyler's patriotism, zeal and honesty.

Unfortunately, the official relations between Schuy-

ler and one of Governor Trumbull's sons — Joseph, the Commissary General of the Continental Army — were strained at this time to such an extent as to result in an open rupture between them. The other two sons, Jonathan and John, who were both in the northern army at this time, appear to have been on the best terms with Schuyler. The merits of the dispute between Commissary General Trumbull and General Schuyler hardly concern us in this connection; but as the matter may be cited as a moving cause for Governor Trumbull to regard Schuyler unkindly, it is well to state the case briefly.

Upon Schuyler's appointment to the command of the northern army, he was clothed with vague, but sweeping authority by Congress to provide everything necessary for the army. This authority might easily be construed to extend to the Commissary Department. Walter Livingston was appointed by Congress as a commissary in or for the northern army. Upon his arrival in New York, Commissary General Trumbull found himself responsible for furnishing the northern army as well as the army under Washington's command, and sent his deputy, Mr. Elisha Avery, to take charge of matters in the northern department for which Schuyler was furnishing money to *his* commissary, Livingston. Schuyler refused to recognize Avery in the matter, even after Washington had informed Schuyler that Congress had decided that the sole right of furnishing the northern army should rest with the Commissary General. Gates is said to have cajoled Avery, and doubtless espoused his side

of the quarrel, though he managed to conceal his cloven foot in the matter more successfully than in some of his later intrigues. At all events, the correspondence between General Gates and Commissary General Trumbull grows active at this time, and some intercepted letters form the basis of an investigation which Schuyler demands of Congress. They form, too, the only product of Commissary Trumbull's pen, which we may regard with regret in his sad, short and arduous career.

The conflict of authority between Commissary General Trumbull and General Schuyler lasted with apparent bitterness for two months, at the end of which time Deputy Commissary Avery was withdrawn from the northern army by the Commissary General, who reports to Congress requesting to be relieved from further connection with the northern army, as General Schuyler had not only refused to furnish money to Avery at a time when he was officially authorized to receive it, but had forbidden him to purchase provisions, and had given him orders conflicting with those of the Commissary General, to whom alone he was accountable. Upon this, Commissary Livingston resigns, and Congress sustains the action of the Commissary General.

It has been asserted that all the Trumbulls had an "intense dislike and jealousy of Schuyler and the New York influence generally."<sup>1</sup> The official quarrel between one of the Trumbulls — Joseph — which is indicated above, appears to be the only ground

<sup>1</sup> Year book Connecticut Society Sons of the American Revolution. 1895 — 1896, p. 185.



for such a statement. Schuyler's relations with two brothers of Joseph Trumbull appear to have been of the most amicable kind, so much so that he had been warned by one of these brothers against the false reports which had been circulated regarding him, and that he had recommended the other brother for promotion. So far as Governor Trumbull is concerned, there is still to be found an iota of proof of his "intense dislike and jealousy of Schuyler." In the quarrel just referred to, it is natural that he might side with his son, who appears to have been in the right, and unfortunately carried his enmity too far. There is but one slight indication, in a letter to his son-in-law, William Williams, that Governor Trumbull had a poor opinion of Schuyler's generalship. In this letter he says: "It is justly to be expected that General Gates is discontented with his situation, finding himself limited and removed from the command, to be a wretched spectator of the ruin of the army, without the power of attempting to save them." This of course was long after the trouble between his son and Schuyler and was written when the fall of Ticonderoga had cast a gloom over all New England; and when loud complaints were made of St. Clair's movements by people ignorant of the military situation.

It seems evident that Schuyler had the utmost regard for Governor Trumbull, writing as he did, on the fifteenth of September: "Your attentions, sir, to supply the army merits the warmest acknowledgments of every friend of his country. You have mine most unfeignedly."

And through the whole course of official correspondence in this campaign, mutual sentiments of personal regard and esteem are exchanged in a way which would leave either or both of these patriots open to the charge of hypocrisy if they had not a high opinion of each other. Certain it is that they worked in the utmost harmony for the common cause, and that they both strove with unswerving fidelity to do everything in their power to remove the disastrous effects of sectional jealousy from which Schuyler so unjustly suffered.

Their official relations continued to be active through the entire period of Schuyler's command, involving conflicts of opinion regarding the delicate subject of Connecticut's embargo and its effect on New York. This matter of conflicting interests between two newly born States was discussed most temperately and courteously by Schuyler and Trumbull, and everything in the power of the latter that could be done to reconcile differences of opinion was done. There is hardly to be found a more striking instance of Trumbull's broad spirit of harmony in the common cause than in his relations with Schuyler. If he cherished that "intense dislike and jealousy" of which he had been suspected, his course is all the more to his credit for preventing his personal feelings from injuring the common cause. And if, as seems to be the case, he appreciated the admirable character of Schuyler at its true worth, he must be credited with a soundness and keenness of judgment which few, if any, New England men exhibited in the case at the time.

## CHAPTER XIX

“THE TIMES THAT TRIED MEN’S SOULS” — DIFFICULTIES IN FILLING CONNECTICUT’S QUOTA — TRYON’S RAID ON DANBURY — TRUMBULL AND THE CONWAY CABAL — THE TITLE “HIS EXCELLENCY” DISTASTEFUL TO THE GOVERNOR

THE gloom cast upon the nation by the success of the British in occupying New York, and by the retreat of Washington through New Jersey with his dwindling army, was in a measure relieved by his wonderful generalship in the battles of Trenton and Princeton. Had these master strokes been fully appreciated in New England, a far more hopeful view of the situation would have prevailed in that important section, and the recruits so sorely needed doubtless would have poured in to relieve the sad lack of men which prevented Washington from following up his advantages. In view of subsequent revelations, it is almost ludicrous to read even Governor Trumbull’s condolences to Washington on the capture of the traitor, General Charles Lee. Such condolences reflect the general view of this affair at the time, and show that it was regarded as a calamity which did much to offset the cheering news of Trenton and Princeton.

But four days before the battle of Trenton, Washington had written an urgent letter to Trum-

bull, informing him that Lee's men, who should have been on the scene weeks before, had not re-enlisted, as Washington had "been taught to believe", and that the militia of New Jersey afforded no aid. "It is easier," he writes, "to conceive than describe the situation I am in, — left, or shall be in a very few days, with only a few Southern regiments (reduced almost to nothing) to oppose Howe's main army, already posted in such a manner as to throw in his whole force upon us so soon as the frost affords him a passage over the Delaware, and our numbers such as to give no effectual opposition." Under these circumstances, he asks that two regiments of Connecticut militia which had been ordered home should be sent back at once.

In the northern army, too, affairs were in a condition far from satisfactory. Men and cannon were much needed, and the old jealousy of New England men, with its disastrous results, continued as before to render Schuyler's position difficult in the extreme. We find Gates at this time absenting himself from the battle of Trenton for the purpose of carrying on his intrigues in Congress whereby he finally succeeded in supplanting Schuyler, and reaping credit for military successes which were due entirely to others.

The drain of the previous two years on the Connecticut treasury had now grown to be a serious matter, so much so that one great difficulty in enlisting men to fill the continental quota lay in lack of funds to pay bounties. Another serious difficulty too, was the lack of arms and ammunition. Added

to all these obstacles was an undefined but unmistakable feeling of discouragement and weariness on the part of the people, which could not be ignored even in Connecticut. These were, as Tom Paine well said, "the times that tried men's souls." But the soul of Connecticut's Governor was equal to the occasion. With every fresh difficulty he redoubled his exertions, in the midst of increasing cares, burdens and anxieties. The treatment of prisoners by the British becomes a source of serious concern to him, and a subject of much correspondence between himself and Washington. The main difficulty in Connecticut, as in all the other States, was the impossibility of filling the quotas under the new establishment of the Continental Army. Three years or the war was a term of enlistment difficult to accomplish among a people whose sole means of livelihood was in the home life on the farm.

By March 6, 1777, the situation had become so serious that Washington writes for two regiments to be sent at once to Peekskill to reinforce the army while waiting for the various States to fill their quotas. These two regiments were at once drafted from ten of the regiments of militia; but a month later Washington writes that only eight hundred of the men had reached Peekskill. At the time when he called for them he wrote urging that men be sent forward for the regular army as fast as enlisted, as the army then consisted of only about five hundred Virginians and parts of two or three regiments — "all very weak." He adds: "I almost tax myself with imprudence in committing the

secret to paper; not that I distrust you, of whose inviolable attachment I have had so many proofs but for fear this letter should by any accident fall into other hands, than those for which it is intended."

Later, while still urging for men to complete Connecticut's quota, and prevent the enemy from going up the Hudson, he writes:

"I mark with peculiar satisfaction and thanks your constant and unwearied assiduity in giving the service every aid in your power."

Washington and Trumbull were in full accord as to the need of long enlistments, and everything that could be done at this time was done towards filling Connecticut's quota.

About this time occurred the first invasion of Connecticut soil by the British under Tryon. Landing on April 25, 1777, his forces proceeded to Danbury where, on the following night, they destroyed large quantities of military stores which had been deposited in that town by order of the General Assembly. The invaders, to the number of two thousand or more, met with a much warmer reception than they expected on their return march to their ships, and barely escaped capture, after a severe fight at Ridgefield and harassing attacks by the fast gathering militia under Wooster, Arnold and Silliman, in which Wooster lost his life.

Tryon's invasion was reported by Trumbull to Washington on the fourth of May, and a request was made for two battalions of Continentals to be stationed in Connecticut, as the Continental Congress had provided, or allowed. Washington

found himself obliged to reply that he could not scatter his forces in such a way, as the entire New England coast had the same right to protection, which it was impossible to grant. He explains the situation fully to Trumbull, who readily acquiesces, though the people were clamorous for such protection, and much interrupted in their important work of farming, so necessary to furnish supplies for their homes and for the army.

Within a month from the time of Tryon's Danbury raid, Colonel Return Jonathan Meigs made his famous whaleboat raid on Sag Harbor, then a British depository of military stores, and accomplished in twenty-five hours, with one hundred and sixty men and without the loss of a man, very nearly the same result in the destruction of military stores which Tryon with two thousand men took three days to accomplish at Danbury, and with a heavy loss and narrow escape.

Washington's belief that in view of these results the enemy would be more cautious in future was fully confirmed, and for more than two years Connecticut soil was free from British invasion.

Discouraging news soon followed from the northern army. The evacuation of Fort Ticonderoga brought about a distrust of the commanding officers which made enlistments more difficult than ever in Connecticut, thus adding to the difficulties which the Governor was constantly obliged to face and fight. Not one whit does the gloom which the news from the north cast over the country abate the Governor's zeal or his faith. "The Lord reigns!" he

writes Washington — “Let us rejoice with thankfulness beforehand for the mercies we have received, and with hope of those we stand in need of.”

And so, through the dark months which followed, he continues to urge enlistments and to take every means to help the common cause, until at last affairs in the north take on a brighter look, through the battles of Oriskany and Bennington; and the tide of the campaign in this department turns, until two months later it culminates in the surrender of Burgoyne. The air of the northern department is now full of victory, the credit of which does not go where it is deserved. Gates, by means of intriguing, had superseded Schuyler, and reaped the laurels which he never earned.

In the more southern campaign affairs wore a different aspect. Washington, with an army whose weakness he dares not disclose, is here facing an enemy far superior in numbers and discipline, perplexed by their vacillating movements, so contrary to sound military principles. The battles of Brandywine and Germantown follow, and though bravely contested under the utmost disadvantages, do not result as everyone in New England is now expecting battles to result, with the defeat of Burgoyne already almost assured. The occupation of Philadelphia by the enemy is also regarded as a dire disaster by the large majority of people, who could not see the sense as well as the humor of Benjamin Franklin's remark, when on being told that the British had taken Philadelphia, he drily responded that Philadelphia had taken the British.



The result of the good fortune of one general and the ill fortune of his commander made the times ripe for the miserable intrigue which bears the name of the Conway cabal. It would be unnecessary to mention this affair, were it not for the fact that statements have appeared in print which connect Governor Trumbull with the plots to remove Washington from the command of the army at this time.<sup>1</sup> The most careful search possible for the authority on which such statements rest has been made, without finding a trace of any word of Governor Trumbull's, either in print or in manuscript, which would tend to such a conclusion.

It is believed by some historians that the movement known as the Conway cabal had a wider scope than it has been generally supposed to have had. Some of the best and greatest statesmen of the time, actuated by true patriotism and love of country, thought of the possibility of a successor for Washington at the time of his appointment to the command of the army, in case of his removal by death or capture, or his inability by reason of sickness or any of the chances of war. How far this possibility was provided for in the councils of such statesmen, we have yet to learn. But it seems obvious to historians who are well qualified to judge that the intriguers of the Conway cabal used this perfectly legitimate view of certain statesmen as the key for their miserable plot when they

<sup>1</sup> P. L. Ford. *Atlantic Monthly*, 75: 633; "The True George Washington", p. 256. L. C. Hatch. "The Administration of the American Revolutionary Army", p. 25.

believed the time to be ripe for it. How far Trumbull's counsels were sought and given even in the legitimate side of this movement it is impossible to learn. That he was in any way connected with the intriguing side of it seems too absurd to believe. Such an inference might, however, be drawn from some statements that have been made, even though it was not intended, in making them, that this view should be taken.

At the time of the plot itself no one had better opportunities for taking an impartial view of the case than Governor Trumbull. His correspondence with Washington at the time was constant, and of a nature to show him all the difficulties which the Commander in Chief had to encounter. At the same time, with Washington at headquarters we find Trumbull's son-in-law, General Jedediah Huntington, from whose letter to Trumbull we will quote a few lines:

November 10, 1777. "I do most heartily pity General Washington. It is impossible for him to operate with vigor; he bears his disappointments with the greatest equanimity, and is anxious to do the best he can in the circumstances. I could give you information that would astonish you."

November 18. "Our army wastes fast; we can raise no recruits for money because it ceases to be of any consideration."

December 14. "Congress, I dare say, think us paltrons for not engaging Mr. Howe the other day at White Marsh. The Committee of Congress who were there, I am told, were pleased to say as much.

An attack would undoubtedly have been the ruin of this army. General Washington is under strong necessity of hazarding an action for the sake of gratifying the opinions of those who ought not, and cannot indeed, judge him, that is, they cannot know the circumstances, or do not always understand the principles upon which the fate of battles depends. The country might in some measure be satisfied for our inactivity, if it would do to let them into the knowledge of our numbers. I wish the General was as strong in the field as he is in the newspapers. A little knowledge of military history will inform any one that an army in one campaign scarcely ever fought two battles so general as those of Brandywine and Germantown. They were not decisive, it is true, and for good reason beside those which have been given to the publick. Gen<sup>l</sup> Washington had not more than about 10,000 at Brandywine, (the militia I don't count) nor has he more than that number of effectives after the junction of the Northern reinforcements (I hardly dare speak the truth). We have very authentick accounts of Howe's exceeding him in numbers, in discipline we know he does. . . . Never I believe did an army want to fight more than ours on our own or equal ground, and the inferior officers & soldiers would cheerfully have gone to their ground had they been ordered, confiding in the wisdom of their superiours."

January 9, 1778. "I hope the situation of our military affairs will not be seen through any false mirrour. They (N. England) must not depend too

much upon their sister States; nor confine themselves to the lines of proportion or equality.”

So much for the information received by Governor Trumbull from his son-in-law, General Huntington. It is quoted merely as a specimen of this correspondence, and must have been allowed by such a man as Trumbull to carry the weight of information from an original and authoritative source.

On the other hand the Governor's son Jonathan was, during all this time, in the northern army, petted by Gates, who appreciated the importance of the assistance of Connecticut. The letters of the younger Jonathan Trumbull to his father evidently bear the flavor of his surroundings in the military family of Gates, and reflect the opinions which were doubtless quite freely expressed in this family. A few specimens of these letters must suffice:

Albany, December 1, 1777. “Is it not astonishing that two months have now nearly passed at the southward since anything had been done? What can be the cause of their lingering inactivity? they have before this had large reinforcements from this army. If nothing is done with the whole united Continental force, will there not be reason for complaint? I fear all is not right. I wish they had the same harmony & unanimity as has prevailed in this quarter. . . .

“We are told that the Adams's have followed Mr. H. home. Is the confederation compleated? A rope of sand cannot be strong.”

Albany, December 4, 1777. “Mr. Pierce returned from Congress two days since, with various

letters, the purport of which you will know when I can reach Lebanon. *His* news is rather very disagreeable, informg that Gen<sup>l</sup> Varnum had evacuated Red Bank Fort, without waitg the attack of Lord Cornwallis, who was on his march for that purpose, and while Gen<sup>l</sup> Green was on his way, with his division, to sustain the Fort. Reasons — none assigned.”

Going on to give particulars of other reports of military movements, he adds:

“Other reports prevail, which I shall not mention. I fear things are bad eno’ below, that the enemy will probably have safe & good winter quarters in the city, & leave our army to shurk for themselves where they can find covering.”

These extracts from letters from General Jedediah Huntington on one hand and Jonathan Trumbull, Junior, on the other, give as full an idea as possible of the information which these two correspondents of the Governor’s thought it prudent to commit to paper.

Between these two correspondents stands William Williams, then in Congress, apparently more concerned with interpreting any reverses of our army as a display of the wrath of the Almighty against a sinful people than in criticizing generalship; as after an elaborate description of the battle of Chad’s Ford, he adds, writing from Congress:

“It is an awful frown of Divine Providence, but we are not at all humbled under it; a sad sign that more dreadful evils await us.”

It cannot be denied that any connection of Trum-

bull with the councils which considered a substitute for Washington in case of need, or with the plots which were formed for removing him from office would be difficult to discover from documentary evidence after this lapse of one hundred and twenty-eight years. The most that can be said in the way of indicating his connection with the matter is that he had at the time a high opinion of Gates, as most New England men had, and that Gates did everything in his power to foster this opinion. But this is far from proving anything, and yet it is as far as we can go. And there seems to be no doubt that he had, after his year and more of active correspondence with Washington, the highest possible opinion of that great man. Some indications of Trumbull's regard for Washington may be gathered from the following extract from a letter which he wrote him on March 21, 1777:

"I have been greatly alarmed with an account of your ill state of health, but had the pleasure yesterday to hear you was mending. May God preserve your life and restore your health, for the sake of your country as well as your friends and your own, is the sincere wish of

"Sir, with highest esteem and regard,

"Your obedient, humble servant,

"Jon<sup>th</sup> Trumbull."

Again, on January 14, 1778, he writes to Washington, speaking of his wish to fill Connecticut's quota, and adding:

"Our inveterate foes will strain every nerve in the manner you mention, which should excite us

to be beforehand with them to strike a home blow before they can be reinforced. It is my most ardent desire that every necessary preparation be made. Such a stroke will best relieve the sufferings of the army. For them I have very tender feelings. At the same time, sir, I feel most cordially for the weight and burdens that lie on your Excellency."

It seems useless to pursue this subject further. The whole situation seems adverse to any view which would connect Trumbull with the plot of Conway and Gates to supersede Washington. Trumbull's entire record shows that he busied himself with other and more practical affairs. Though he constantly watched the progress of military movements, he is rarely, if ever, to be found outside the limits of his stanch little State, where he constantly toiled and hoped and prayed for the success of the righteous cause to which he was committed, heart and soul. It should be remembered, too, that he was at this time a man of sixty-seven, with a large experience in judicial matters and a calm, impartial judgment of men and affairs. If any of the family were connected with the Conway cabal, it might have been his son Jonathan, who, with less mature judgment, was under the immediate influence of Gates and his military family, the same family which received Lafayette's toast to the Commander in Chief so coldly and awkwardly on a certain festive occasion. But we lack proof that young Trumbull yielded to these influences. It should be remembered, too, that his position as Paymaster of the northern department was, at the time, of a character to give

him but little, if any, influence in Congress, the only body whose acts were worth anything to the plotters.

At the May session of the General Assembly of Connecticut in 1777, the title "His Excellency" was adopted by vote, as "the stile, title or appellation of the Governor or Commander in Chief."

This was distasteful to the Governor; and as it appears to be the only trace we can find of his own view of his personal distinction, it is important, in estimating his character, that we should study his own words on the subject, addressed to the General Assembly. A full year had elapsed since the enactment of that body had burdened him with this title, and it appears that it continued to disturb him to such an extent that he is moved to address them in the following words:

"An act of this Assembly made and passed this time twelve months ordered the stile of *His Excellency* to be given the Governor of this State. This savouring too much of High Titles, and not beneficial, may it not honorably be repealed? It passed without previous knowledge, expectation or desire. Asking pardon from you and from my successors, I do sincerely request its repeal. It is Honor and Happiness enough to meet the Approbation of Heaven, of my conscience, and of my Brethren."

Mindful, perhaps, of the mischief made in the army particularly by jealousies caused by the appointments of Congress, and by some appointments in the civil service, he adds:



“High sounding Titles intoxicate the mind, ingenerate envy, breed disorders in a commonwealth, and ought therefore to be avoided. The true grandeur and solid glory do not consist in high Titles, splendour, pomp, and magnificence, nor in reverence and exterior honor paid to their Governors and Rulers, but in the real and solid advantages derived therefrom.”

There were sticklers for rank, for position and empty honors, in the days of the Revolution, from John Hancock down, but Governor Trumbull was not one of them.

## CHAPTER XX

TRUMBULL'S ILLNESS AND MESSAGE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY — TAXATION — REGULATING ACTS — CONFEDERATION — RELIEF FOR VALLEY FORGE — CORRESPONDENCE WITH TRYON — THE ERRAND OF THE "SPY" — DEATH OF JOSEPH TRUMBULL

UP to the time of the adjourned session of the General Assembly in February, 1778, Governor Trumbull appears to have been present at every session during the nine years of his incumbency. His health had been remarkable for a man of his years and burdens; but in February we find him sending the following message to the General Assembly:

"Gentlemen of the Council, and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives:

"It having pleased Providence to detain me by indisposition from a personal attendance with you, I am to take this method of addressing you on the present important occasion. The papers relative to the business which will come under your attention accompany this, — and any letters under address to me, which may be received in my absence, His Honor the Deputy Governor will open and communicate.

"The Articles of Confederation of the United States call first for your attention, and as this

business was well nigh completed during your late sessions, I hope it will be speedily finish'd.

“The necessity of immediate large Taxation was next considered, and I trust will now occupy your serious attention. For my own part, I am more fully convinced that this is the only effectual and safe method of extricating ourselves from our present difficulties and of giving value to our currency, and that this time is the most proper for adopting this remedy, is almost self-evident. Our debts must be paid, and all men will allow that it is more easy to pay a nominal sum, when money is plenty and cheaply earned, than when it is the scarcest, and consequently the dearest article.

“The doings of the convention at New Haven, in the regulation of prices, &c., will likewise come before you, and will demand your very serious consideration. As it is a matter of particular concern to the whole body of the people, will it not be advisable to defer your determination therein, until it can be referr'd to and considered by them in their town meetings? At least, it is not, in my opinion, safe to attempt the regulation of those articles, which are immediately necessary for the support of the army. We may, it is true, avail ourselves of whatever is at present on hand — but meantime, if we affix a low price to provisions and articles of importation, we shall find that the farmer will cease to till the ground for more than is necessary for his own subsistence — and the merchant to risque his fortune on a small and precarious prospect of gain. These things I trust will be carefully

attended to, and those measures adopted which will best promote the public good."

In accordance with these recommendations, the Articles of Confederation were adopted at this session, and a tax of two shillings on the pound was laid, one half to be paid by the following June and the other half by the following November. This tax was to meet the payment of \$600,000 apportioned to Connecticut by Congress in a call on the thirteen States for \$5,000,000.

In the matter of the regulation of prices, the General Assembly and the Governor could not agree. A measure was quite promptly passed at this session in accordance with the recommendation of Congress "for the regulation of prices of labour, produce, manufactures and commodities within this state", and was followed by an enactment that no person could "commence or maintain any suit either in law or equity within this state" until he should take solemn oath that he had not violated any provision of the act regulating prices.

From Trumbull's later correspondence with Washington, we learn that he was utterly opposed to the legislation, and that it caused him much concern. That he was right in his belief we may see from the fact that in the following May the regulating act was suspended, and in the following October repealed, no doubt in the light of rather bitter experience which the Governor alone appears to have foreseen.

It was during the Governor's illness that a letter from Washington under date of February sixth came

to Hartford and was, no doubt, opened by Deputy Governor Griswold, and by him communicated to the General Assembly, in accordance with Governor Trumbull's general instructions at the opening of the session. This letter informs the Governor that the army at Valley Forge must disband, "unless more constant, regular and larger supplies of the meat kind are furnished than have been for some time past." Washington adds:

"I must therefore, sir, entreat you in the most earnest terms, and by that zeal which has so eminently distinguished your character in the present arduous struggle, to give every countenance to the person or persons employed in the purchasing line in your State, and to urge them to the most vigorous efforts to forward supplies of cattle from time to time; and thereby prevent such a melancholy and alarming catastrophe. As I observed before, this subject is rather out of your province, yet I know your wishes to promote the service in every possible degree will render an apology unnecessary. . . ."

This alarming situation appears to have been provided for by the Governor and Council of Safety in the previous month of January by the appointment of Colonel Henry Champion, "a gentleman of great judgment, capacity and experience in the business of procuring and purchasing fat cattle, especially beyond any other person in this State, and of most unexceptionable honor and integrity,"<sup>1</sup> as purchaser of cattle, to be driven to such places

<sup>1</sup> Public Records of the State of Connecticut. 1: 511, 512.

“as may be directed by the commissary general of issues or other proper authority.”

Colonel Champion's objections to serving under the rules of the then disorganized Commissary Department were overcome, and he entered at once into this important service, with the sum of \$200,000 placed in his hands and in the hands of Peter Colt, Deputy Commissary General of purchases. A later vote of the Council of Safety provides an additional sum of \$200,000 for the same purpose.

The first drove of cattle, to the number of three hundred, was driven by Colonel Champion and his son Epaphroditus to the starving army at Valley Forge, where in five days, according to the testimony of the younger Champion, they were devoured so eagerly that “you might have made a knife out of every bone.” Colonel Champion and Commissary Jeremiah Wadsworth continued their efforts by request and direction of Governor Trumbull and his Council of Safety; and it is hardly too much to say that the distressing condition of the army was more effectively relieved by Connecticut at this time than by any other one State. As late as the fifth of May Governor Trumbull writes to Washington:

“The activities and abilities of Mr. Wadsworth and Champion will doubtless be exerted to the utmost, and I hope will not fail of success.”

Wadsworth was at this time Commissary General of the Continental Army. The utterly absurd course of Congress in reorganizing, or, more properly, disorganizing the Commissary Department had, more than any other cause, led to the situation

at Valley Forge, as it had previously led to the resignation of Commissary General Joseph Trumbull, who very properly declined to serve in a position where the control of the department was taken from him and the responsibilities only left. Having succeeded to an alarming extent in starving the army as the result of criminally foolish legislation, Congress, in April of this year, had practically reëstablished the former organization of the Commissary Department, and had persuaded Jeremiah Wadsworth to take charge of it.

Joseph Trumbull was now at his home in Lebanon, suffering from a fatal illness brought on by the cares, anxieties and fatigues of his office. In this same month of April an interesting correspondence began between Governor William Tryon and Governor Trumbull. Tryon had at this time received from Lord George Germaine the draft of two bills which had been read in Parliament on the nineteenth of the previous February, with "his Majesty's command that they be printed and dispersed" throughout the American colonies. One of these bills was for the abolition of internal taxation in the American colonies by the government of Great Britain, and the other "to enable his Majesty to appoint Commissioners with sufficient Powers to treat, consult and agree upon the means of quieting the Disorders now subsisting in certain of the Colonies, Plantations and Provinces of North America." It can only be remarked in passing that the year 1778 was not as favorable for such negotiations as the year 1775 would have been.

On April 17, 1778, Tryon writes to Governor Trumbull as follows:

“Sir, — Having been honored with the King’s commands to circulate the enclosures to the people at large, I take the liberty to offer them to you for your candid consideration, and to recommend that through your means the inhabitants within your Province may be acquainted with the same, as also the other Provinces to the eastward.

“I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
“W<sup>m</sup> Tryon.”

The reception which this communication met at the hands of the Governor can best be shown by quoting his reply in full:

“Lebanon, 23<sup>d</sup> April, 1778.

“Sir, — Your letter of the 17th instant from New York is received with its enclosures, and the several similar packets of various addresses with which it was accompanied.

“Propositions of peace are usually made from the supreme authority of one contending power to the similar authority of the other; and the present is the first instance within my recollections where a vague, half blank, and very indefinite draft of a bill *once* only read before *one* of *three bodies* of the legislature of a nation has ever been addressed to the people at large of an opposite power, as an overture of reconciliation. There was a day when even this step from our then acknowledged parent state might have been accepted with joy and gratitude. But that day, Sir, is passed irrevocably. The repeated insolent rejection of our sincere and sufficiently



humble petitions, the unprovoked commencement of hostilities, the barbarous inhumanity which has marked the prosecution of the war on your part in its several stages, the insolence which displays itself on every petty advantage, the cruelty which has been exhausted on those unhappy men whom the fortune of war has thrown into your hands, — all these are insuperable and eternal bars to the very idea of concluding a peace with Great Britain on any other conditions than the most absolute and perfect independency.

“To the Congress of the United States of America, therefore, all proposals of this kind are to be addressed. And you must give me leave, Sir, to say that the present mode bears too much the marks of an insidious design to disunite the people, and to lull us into a state of quietude and negligence of the necessary preparations for the approaching campaign.

“If this be its real design it is fruitless. If peace be really the object let your proposals be addressed properly to the proper power, and your negotiations honorably conducted, and we shall then have some prospect of (what is the most ardent wish of every honest American) a lasting and honorable peace. The British nation may then, perhaps, find us as affectionate and valuable friends as we are now determined and fatal enemies, and derive from that friendship more solid and real advantage than the most sanguine can expect from conquest.”

“I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“Jon<sup>th</sup> Trumbull.”

The correspondence was renewed six months later by the transmission by Tryon to Trumbull of "several printed copies of the King's Commissioners' Manifesto and Proclamation." These documents appear to have been sent to the Congress of the United States, which course Trumbull commends as the proper one in his reply to Tryon, though he deprecates the motive which seems to underlie the "proclamation and manifesto." At this time, the bills abolishing internal taxes and appointing commissioners to treat with the colonists had passed by vote of Parliament. It was a vote to give up, practically, everything for which Great Britain had been contending; and, in view of the French alliance which had been completed, the action of the Mother Country was very much like locking the stable door after the horse had been stolen.

At the time of Trumbull's reply to Tryon's first communication, news of the passage of these bills had not reached America. Usually such important matters as this letter of the Governor's were submitted to the General Assembly for its approval, but this body was not in session at the time, and the records of the Council of Safety make no mention of the affair. Later the Connecticut delegates to the Continental Congress informed the Governor that his "late correspondence with General Tryon meets with universal approval." General Gates, to whom a copy of this correspondence was sent, failed to mention it in his frequent letters to the Governor. Gates joined with the traitor, Charles

Lee, in favoring negotiations with the British commissioners.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important duties assigned to the Governor in this year was the sending to our ambassadors to France a copy of the treaty of alliance ratified by the Continental Congress. The letter transmitting this document to the Governor reads thus:

“Your Excellency having been requested by the Marine Committee to have a packet boat in readiness to carry important dispatches to France, we have now sent such to your care, conditionally, which we desire you to give in charge to a trusty Captain, to deliver with his own hands to our Commissioners at Paris. Your wisdom will dictate pointed orders for conveying the packets without injury, w<sup>th</sup> secresy & with dispatch; but, for sinking them in case the vessel should be unfortunately taken.

“We are respectfully

“Your Excellency’s humble servants,

“Richard Henry Lee,

“James Lovell.

“York Town, May 19th, 1778

“Governour Trumbull”

In compliance with this request, the little schooner *Spy*, of fifty tons’ burden, under command of Captain Robert Niles, was selected for this important service. Of the six vessels separately despatched for this purpose, the *Spy* was the only one which

<sup>1</sup> Lecky. “England in the 18th Century.” Vol. 4, p. 85.

escaped capture. She was a fleet little schooner, under an able and trustworthy captain, and it is to be supposed that the wisdom of the Governor and Council in making the selection lay partly in the fact that it would seem impossible to the enemy that so small a craft would cross the Atlantic as an American war vessel. The passage from Stonington to Brest was made in twenty-one days, and Captain Niles had the honor of delivering into the hands of Benjamin Franklin at Paris his mail containing this precious document, "being", as the records of the Council of Safety state, "the first account he had received of that event, which was greatly satisfactory to him and the French ministry and nation in general", etc.

On July 23, 1778, the Governor suffered a sad bereavement in the death of his eldest son, Joseph, whose career as a young merchant and later as Commissary General has been outlined in several previous chapters. Informing Washington of his loss, the Governor writes, on the twenty-fifth of July:

"I very sincerely thank your Excellency for your friendly and affectionate good will and wishes towards my late dear son, whom it pleased the sovereign Arbiter of life and death to remove from this world about sunrising of the 23<sup>d</sup> instant.

"This is a heavy and sore breach upon me; but it is my duty to be still and know that God has done it, who has a right to dispose of all His creatures as He pleaseth, and ever exercises that right in perfect consistence with holiness, justice and goodness."

To this intelligence Washington replies on the twenty-eighth:

"I sincerely condole with you on the death of your worthy son, Colonel Joseph Trumbull, whose exertions in the cause of his country, while he continued in a public character, will reflect honor upon his memory; and for whom, when living, I entertained a most cordial regard."

Joseph Trumbull had been married a little more than a year to Amelia, daughter of Eliphalet Dyer. He left no children. The settlement of his estate was a most complicated undertaking, and devolved mainly upon his father and his brother Jonathan. Unsettled accounts with the Continental Congress formed, of course, the chief difficulty. On the sixth of October, the Governor writes to his good friend Henry Laurens, President of the Continental Congress, presenting a memorial to Congress regarding the unsettled claims of his son Joseph. One paragraph in this letter is so characteristic that it must be quoted:

"I am little apt, and always unwilling to speak advantageously of myself or my children; but as after all some justice is due to one's self and to them, as well as to others, I beg leave to represent that the attachment of myself, of this son of mine, and my whole family, to the American cause and independency was always unshaken, our endeavors to promote the same unwearied. That his principles were honest and honorable, his doings in his department to the satisfaction of the General, of the officers, and of the army. That he had, and his

relict and heirs have, a common claim to a just and reasonable reward for his services."

President Laurens' reply, speaking of the delayed action of Congress regarding this claim, says:

"The best influence on that occasion was to assure my friends who were unacquainted with the merits of the late Mr. Joseph Trumbull, that he had been one of the best servants of Congress, that I was persuaded had he been continued in the office of Commissary upon his own terms the public would have saved five millions of dollars or more, and many hundreds of soldiers. To prove this to the satisfaction of every reasonable person will not be difficult to me. It requires only a retrospect to the circumstances of our army at Valley Forge during the last winter, and to the amazing advance of every species of provision immediately after the stores which he had amassed were consumed."

After much correspondence, and as the result of a long sojourn in Philadelphia by the Governor's son Jonathan, who acted as the administrator of his brother Joseph's estate, the accounts of the late Commissary General were finally settled by Congress by an allowance of one half per cent. on all money received, and two and one half per cent. on all money expended in purchases. These allowances were accompanied by resolutions of Congress highly commending the services of the late Commissary General.

## CHAPTER XXI

THE WYOMING MASSACRE — BATTLE OF RHODE ISLAND  
— FAILURE — THE GOVERNOR'S COMMENTS — HIS  
SON A VOLUNTEER — GENERAL GATES ENTERTAINED  
AT HARTFORD — NAVAL SUCCESSES — BUSHNELL'S  
TORPEDO — FINANCES — CONFEDERATION URGED BY  
TRUMBULL

**A**DDED to the sorrows and anxieties of this sad summer, the news of the terrible Wyoming massacre reached the Governor at about the time of his son's death. We have seen his interest in Connecticut's right to the territory where this tragedy occurred in the able statement which he made of the Susquehanna case, so called. At this time — July, 1778 — the Wyoming valley was Connecticut soil both by charter rights and legislative enactment; for it lay in the County of Westmoreland, having previously been a part of Litchfield County, and sent its deputies to the General Assembly of Connecticut. Although the State with this far-off addition was a geographical absurdity, the claim was in force, and the population was largely composed of people from the Connecticut of New England who had settled in the beautiful valley under the auspices of the Susquehanna Company.

The horrors of this massacre are too well known to every reader of American history to need recital

here. All the vindictiveness of evicted Tories was added to the savage instincts of their Indian allies, aroused to the full by the victory of an overwhelming force over a little band of brave defenders of their homes. The only safety for the survivors lay in flight through a strange and sometimes trackless country. Of these survivors but few men were left; and women, children and aged men made up the bulk of this crowd of hapless refugees. They reached their old Connecticut homes after untold sufferings and hardships. Their story was told to Governor Trumbull by "Messrs Jenkins, Gallup and Harding, persons of integrity who removed from the eastern part of this State, and settled at said Westmoreland, and had the good fortune to escape the carnage." <sup>1</sup>

As a result of the Governor's request to Congress and his correspondence with Washington, three regiments, with a part of Morgan's rifle corps, were sent to Wyoming. These forces were, as Washington writes, "of considerable service", enabling the Connecticut settlers to return to their former homes and secure crops which had escaped destruction.

The Cherry Valley massacre, which occurred in the following November, made it necessary that more active measures should be taken to prevent such barbarous raids as were made at Wyoming and Cherry Valley. Sullivan's Indian campaign was organized and undertaken in the following July. This plan was contemplated soon after the Wyoming horror, but the military situation was such at that time that it was necessary to wait before taking

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Governor Trumbull to General Washington, August 27, 1778.



this measure, the results of which the Governor had the satisfaction of learning. With true Connecticut grit and perseverance the Wyoming settlers now returned, and renewed their industries in that beautiful valley in comparative security. In 1782, by decree of a council appointed by Congress, Connecticut was deprived of all jurisdiction in this section where for so many years her sons had settled, so that their claims for indemnity for their losses in war could not be recognized by the State government under which they had settled, or by the State of Pennsylvania to which later jurisdiction was given.

In the midst of the grief and anxieties occasioned by the illness and death of his son, and by the Wyoming massacre, an important military movement almost at the doors of Connecticut called for the most arduous and prompt measures on the part of the Governor and his Council. This was the attempt, with the aid of the French fleet under Admiral D'Estaing, to dislodge the enemy from their stronghold at Newport and to drive them out of Rhode Island, the only place on New England soil where they still retained a foothold. In July letters came pouring in upon the Governor from Washington and from President Laurens, urging every possible attention on the part of Connecticut to the wants of the French fleet, and reinforcements for General Sullivan in command at Rhode Island; from Governor Greene, to the same effect; and from Sullivan, expecting an attack on Providence and calling most earnestly for men from Con-

necticut. In response to these requests, seven companies of infantry and one matross company were immediately sent, notwithstanding the heavy drains made upon the State for keeping up its quota in the main army. Fifty barrels of beef and one hundred barrels of pork were also forwarded from Connecticut's commissary's stores at Boston by direction of the Governor to meet an emergency call from General Sullivan; and during this short campaign two hundred barrels of powder were sent, at Governor Greene's request, to replace ammunition destroyed by the severe and unprecedented rainstorm of August. Water boats were fitted out at New London by Washington's request to supply the French fleet, and pilots were in readiness to meet this fleet on its arrival.

In July, everything appeared auspicious, and Connecticut patriots were already rejoicing in imagination at the prospect of a signal victory. Proclamations of a hopeful and encouraging tone, calling for volunteers in addition to the quota, were issued by the Governor. The French alliance was regarded as an "interposition of Providence", the first fruits of which were to be gathered near a town of that name in Rhode Island. But this was not to be. A tremendous storm arose at the time when the French fleet was maneuvering to engage the British fleet, and scattered the ships, dismasting some of them. On returning to Newport, Admiral D'Estaing, in spite of earnest protests from Sullivan and others, insisted on sailing for Boston to refit, and the American forces, largely

outnumbered, were left without their expected naval support, and obliged to retire. On this subject Governor Trumbull writes Washington, on the twenty-seventh of August:

“Thus are our raised expectations from an expedition, which had all the appearance of success, damped. This shows us that we ought not to place our dependence too much on foreign aid;—but may such disappointment teach us to place our trust and confidence in that Supreme Being who governs the universe, and can, with infinite ease, turn those things which we are ready to conclude are against us, eventually to our advantage, in whose allwise disposals may we cheerfully acquiesce, and rest satisfied that whatever He doth is right.”

The anxiety of the Governor regarding this short campaign was greatly heightened by the fact that his youngest son, John, had volunteered as an aide to General Sullivan, and was in the thick of the fight of the twenty-ninth of August, being obliged to carry Sullivan's orders from one division to another at great personal risk from the showers of musket balls, grapeshot, and round shot through which he passed on horseback, in performance of his duties. He fortunately escaped injury, and says in his reminiscences:

“It becomes me to say with the Psalmist, ‘I thank thee, O thou Most High, for thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.’ For never was aide de camp exposed to more danger than I was during that entire day, from daylight to dusk.”

His son's participation in this battle formed a new bond of sympathy between the Governor and President Laurens, for on the fifth of the following October we find the former writing to the latter:

"With great sincerity and satisfaction I beg leave to congratulate your Excellency on the happy escape from danger of your son in the late attempt on Rhode Island, and on the honor he has very justly obtained from the share he bore in the events of that expedition, particularly in the memorable battle fought on that island.

"With much gratitude to the disposer of events I also acknowledge the safety of *my* youngest son, who voluntarily, and without my approbation, shared the like dangers in the same expedition."

To this President Laurens replies on November 10:

"I perceive, Sir, we were in equal danger on the 28 August, and that we have each of us particular cause for thankfulness for the escape of our children from dangers to which their love of country had exposed them. My own inform me what were *your* feelings while the event of the day remained unknown to us, and I am persuaded that we have both learned in all cases, under the severest pangs arising from apprehensions, such as I confess I felt, on that occasion, and in deep distress from real misfortunes, to say, — 'Thy will be done.'"

The brilliant military career of President Laurens' son John here referred to lasted throughout the war, and was brought to a sad end, in a little skirmish in 1782, in which he fell, mortally wounded, at the head of his troops.

The equally distinguished and more varied career of Colonel John Trumbull was destined to last more than half a century beyond the career of the brave Colonel John Laurens.

It was during the month of October in this year that General Gates, with his staff, was much more royally entertained at Hartford than he deserved to be. He stood high in popular favor at this time, since the magnanimous Washington had kept his share in the Conway cabal as profound a secret as possible, and the bubble of his military reputation was yet to burst by means of his blundering campaign in the South. The sum of £500 was appropriated by the General Assembly for the reception given to him at Hartford, thirteen toasts were drunk, among them one to "General Washington and the American Army", in which it is hoped he responded more warmly than to a similar toast proposed by Lafayette on a previous occasion. Another of these toasts was "The American Navy", which touched Connecticut quite closely at this time in view of the recent capture of the British warships *Admiral Keppel* and *Cyrus*<sup>1</sup> by the Connecticut warships *Oliver Cromwell* and *Defence*. These were valuable prizes, as the following extract from a letter of Samuel Eliot, Junior, Connecticut's agent at Boston, goes to show:

"It is with great pleasure that I am able to inform your Excellency, that the Kepple and Cyrus prizes turn out so well as not only to pay the moneys

<sup>1</sup> The name of this vessel is given in unofficial papers as the *Cygnus*. *New London Company Hist. Soc. Records and papers*, vol. 1, pt. 4, p. 38.

advanc'd for the Defence and Cromwell, but that I shall be able to remit a very large sum to the State."

This sum was expected to reach at least £5,000. These were said to be the most important prizes captured by Connecticut vessels during the war. During the previous year the aggregate of prize money was larger, and the losses of American vessels fewer, the value of prizes for that year being estimated at £200,000. As a matter of fact, the naval service of the State in the Revolution has never received from historians the notice which it deserved. It is safe to say that during the war no fewer than two hundred and fifty armed vessels of various kinds and classes were fitted out in this little State for naval service; and the position of the Governor as commander in chief of the naval as well as the military forces of Connecticut added largely to his burdens and responsibilities. The British soon learned that such a thing as an American war vessel was neither an impossibility nor a farce, and the moral effect of Connecticut's motley fleet was a much more important factor than it is generally supposed to be. This moral effect, too, was much enhanced by the invention made by David Bushnell of Saybrook. This is said to have been the first marine torpedo known to history. The Governor was much interested in this invention which, though it did not actually do much damage, gave to the British that sense of the unknown risks which might be encountered at anchor which was extremely annoying, and probably prevented some

coastwise movements which might have been undertaken if this risk had not stood in the way. Bushnell's machine also inspired the pen of Francis Hopkinson, whose "Battle of the Kegs" appeared at a time when the enemy were much alarmed by amazing submarine explosions in the vicinity of their fleet, and added ridicule to their alarm.

Bushnell appeared before the Governor and Council with models of his machine, and was given every facility which the State could afford for carrying on his enterprise. He was also recommended to Congress, in the hope that Federal aid would be granted him; and in 1779 he was warmly recommended by Governor Trumbull to Washington, who granted him the position of Captain in his corps of sappers and miners, which did good service at Yorktown.

By no means the least of the cares and anxieties which beset the Governor during this eventful year 1778 was the money problem. Connecticut's policy since 1776 had been, at his earnest recommendation, to issue no more State bills of credit, but to meet expenses by direct taxation. The expedients of Congress for raising money through State loan offices, lotteries, and other devices failed to accomplish their object; and in 1778 Congress resorted to Connecticut's simple and sound expedient of taxation. The sum of \$5,000,000 was apportioned among the thirteen States, the share of Connecticut being \$600,000, which, although far beyond her just proportion, Connecticut promptly assumed and promptly provided for by laying a tax to raise the

money. The correspondence of the Governor with the Connecticut delegates to the Continental Congress and with President Laurens is full of recommendations, discussions and suggestions on this all-important subject of the finances of the country, in the hope that some uniform and sound plan might be adopted by which the thirteen States might work together in harmony for the common good.

In November, 1778, the Governor's son Jonathan was unanimously appointed Comptroller of the Treasury of the United States, a position which, as Roger Sherman says, placed him at the head of this department.

The newly appointed Comptroller had been in Philadelphia for some time, endeavoring to arrange with Congress for a settlement of the accounts of his late brother Joseph, and no doubt had shown his financial ability in a way to recommend him to this office. Sherman at this time had been the means of reorganizing the Treasury Department, and doubtless favored the appointment of the Comptroller. This position, during the time he held it, enabled him to give valuable information to his father regarding the state of the national finances.

In addition to his solicitude for the finances of the country, Trumbull was also deeply solicitous regarding the Articles of Confederation, to which some of the States were so slow to agree. His correspondence with the Connecticut delegates makes frequent mention of the need of confederation, as, for example, on the twenty-fifth of August:

"I am exceedingly anxious to see our confedera-



tion compleated. The four States — how long must the others wait for them? If they are not like to comply soon, should we not confederate without them?"

And again, on the eighth of December:

"A foreign loan taken upon proper principles appears to me much more eligible. There is no doubt it may be obtained when Confederation is settled, and funds for it can be laid. Why, are not the Articles of Confederation concluded? Is it not needful this and the affair of our finances be finally settled before the enemy leave us? Will not these things left for an after-settlement breed internal differences?"

In view of subsequent events, there was something prophetic in these questions of Connecticut's patriotic Governor.

In the midst of this solicitude for the general good, it is rarely that we get even the slightest personal reflection. The documents he has left us are for the most part of a public and impersonal character, continually informed and inspired by an abiding religious faith which was so much a part of his public life that it frequently appears in his correspondence and official utterances. We may catch something of his view of his own life, in connection with his broad view of public affairs, from the following extract from a letter which he wrote to Silas Deane, with whom he was then on intimate terms on October 6, 1778. Speaking of the death of his son, he says:

"The treatment he met, without thanks or re-

ward for more than two years' indefatigable labours and risque, grieved him to the heart, brought on and increased his bodily disorders, preyed on his constitution, exhausted his spirits, wore them out, and finished his days. Mine are nearly terminated; may afflictions wean me from a fondness for life, and quicken my preparations for an exchange of worlds. The curtain is thin, yet perfectly dark, save what is revealed by the Lord. We live by faith and not by sight. We are in the latter end of the last days. The marvellous events of Providence seem to open to our view a rising empire in this western world, to enlarge our Redeemer's kingdom and to pull down the Papacy. Another, the Russian, is rising in the north quarters to subdue the Ottoman, to dry up the waters of the River Euphrates, to prepare the way for the kings of the east.

"A commonwealth is the most rational and equitable form of government; it grows and flourishes where virtue is its object; it decays and sinks where luxury, the source of corruption, prevails and increaseth.

"May these States become free and independent, union and harmony be established, virtue encouraged and maintained, and peace restored and confirmed with all the world."

Within a week from the time of writing this letter Governor Trumbull had completed his sixty-eighth year.

## CHAPTER XXII

SCARCITY OF PROVISIONS — GOVERNOR TRYON AGAIN  
THREATENS AN INVASION — HE ATTACKS NEW HAVEN  
AND BURNS FAIRFIELD AND NORWALK — ARREST OF  
WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON — HIS RELEASE — FINAN-  
CIAL AFFAIRS — TRUMBULL'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH  
VAN DER CAPELLAN — HIS PLANS FOR A HISTORY  
OF THE REVOLUTION

THE continued and incessant drain upon Connecticut began to be more keenly felt than ever before at the opening of the year 1779. Hay reached the price of two hundred dollars per ton at about this time, and Commissary General Wadsworth speaks feelingly of the difficulties of his situation in a letter to Governor Trumbull dated April sixth, telling how he has scoured the country for flour especially, and finds little or none to be had. He expresses fears that the troops at New London are at that moment without bread, and speaks of the absurdity of seizing flour under the law in the following words:

“If it were possible to obtain bread for the army by the present law, the expense is so great that the Treasury of the United States is not sufficient to pay for it.”

He encloses a statement of the cost of thirty-four “casks” of flour, containing about the quantity which our present barrels contain, and costing by

the process of seizure and appraisal the sum of £1412, 1s. 8d.

In the earlier days of this year, Yale College was dismissed some three weeks earlier than usual, and the winter vacation extended two weeks beyond the usual time, because it was impossible for the steward to procure flour "to uphold Commons in the Hall."<sup>1</sup> On the second of February we find President Stiles writing to Governor Trumbull asking for an order on the Commissary General for fifty or sixty barrels of flour for the use of the college.

About this time the soul of the Governor is vexed by a communication from Governor Tryon of New York, again apparently attempting pacification by mail, and to that end sending "some publications of the loyal city of New York" and asking for newspapers from Connecticut; at the same time assuring the Governor that he has nothing to conceal "but our military operations; and we should be happy if a prudent and sensible moderation on your side would give us occasion to make them unnecessary." To this communication no reply appears on record. Immediate measures, however, were taken by the Governor, on his own initiative, to strengthen the defenses of New London, which town it was believed would soon be attacked by Tryon. The Governor's course was promptly approved by the Council of Safety, and reinforcements were ordered to New London to such an extent that the cautious Tryon refrained from making the expected attack.

<sup>1</sup> Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D., vol. 2, pp. 315, 316, 320, 321.

For three months and more from this time, Tryon appears to have been watching for a vulnerable point on the Connecticut coast; and early in July made a demonstration towards Norwalk and Fairfield, in which such portion of his forces as were engaged were repulsed by the brave home guard of these two towns. This was, perhaps, a reconnoitering expedition, or a feint on Tryon's part, as the entire force engaged in this demonstration was reported to Governor Trumbull to be about two hundred men, with six vessels carrying in all about twenty guns. In the previous February, Tryon had made a border raid at Horse-neck, destroying the salt works there, and giving the occasion for Putnam's famous ride to Stratford, in which he exceeded the eulogy on his tombstone by daring to lead where no one dared to follow.

Tryon's demonstration at Norwalk and Fairfield was the signal for a series of raids on defenseless Connecticut towns. On the morning of Monday, the fifth of July, as the people of New Haven were preparing to celebrate the third anniversary of American independence, a fleet of forty vessels under the naval command of Sir George Collier and the military command of William Tryon and General George Garth appeared off West Haven, where about one thousand men under Garth were landed, and later at East Haven, where about twelve hundred men under Tryon landed with the purpose of joining Garth at New Haven. Both these divisions met with gallant opposition from the hastily gathered defenders, among whom were

a number of Yale students together with the venerable President of Yale, Doctor Naphtali Daggett. Having entered New Haven, a scene of plunder, murder and rapine took place which goes far to blacken the record of the British and Hessian soldiers of the Revolution. The approach of four regiments of militia under General Andrew Ward caused Tryon and his men to make a hasty retreat to their ships on the following morning. The news of this raid was reported to Governor Trumbull by General Ward from his military point of view, and in fuller detail by Peter Colt.

The raid on New Haven was followed by a similar attack on Fairfield on the eighth of July. Unfortunately, no organized plan for meeting this attack could be made; and though the handful of men who were able to oppose the invaders stood their ground bravely, the work of destruction was quickly carried out, and practically the whole town, with some of the outlying parishes, perished in the flames. Here, as at New Haven, a proclamation was read or published, offering indemnity to those who peacefully occupied their homes during the invasion, and to civil and military officers who "give proof of their penitence and voluntary submission." Before this proclamation had reached those to whom it was addressed, one half the town of Fairfield was in flames, and the other half doomed.

Quickly withdrawing from Fairfield, under a harassing fire, the fleet crossed to Huntington, Long Island, where it remained until the tenth, taking in supplies. Norwalk was the next victim.

Early in the morning of July eleventh a landing was effected, and Garth and Tryon approached the fated town by two different routes. Although a force of seven hundred militia had been despatched to Norwalk by the Governor's orders, under General Oliver Wolcott, and a small force of Continentals under General Samuel H. Parsons was also present, but little opposition to the invaders was made, and Norwalk was also burned to the ground.

This ended Tryon's series of raids on Connecticut. To reinforce the raw militia under General Wolcott, Washington had now ordered two Connecticut brigades, under General William Heath, to march from their headquarters in the Highlands "towards Bedford." Having learned of the raids on New Haven, Fairfield and Norwalk, Heath marched his two brigades towards Stamford, which town appeared to be threatened by Tryon, whose caution caused him to refrain from the proposed attack in view of the American force now opposed to him.

The situation in Connecticut was now serious and alarming, and the Governor and Council of Safety busied themselves in providing as fully as possible for the defense of New London and other important towns along the coast which might be in danger of an attack. These raids of Tryon's resulted, of course, in great hardships to the people of New Haven, Fairfield and Norwalk, the last two towns being practically wiped out of existence, and the first having suffered from the brutal outrages, plundering, murders and rapine to which all three were subjected.

In connection with the alarm and indignation of the sufferers and their neighbors, an episode occurred which placed Governor Trumbull in a very delicate and disagreeable position. This was the arrest of William Samuel Johnson, whose letters from England and whose excellent service as agent for Connecticut some ten years before this time have been fully referred to in some of the earlier chapters. At the outbreak of the Revolution — or, more properly, from the time of his fruitless embassy to General Gage at Boston — Johnson had retired to private life in his native town of Stratford, believing that independence could never be achieved by his young and feeble country through war with the mighty Mother Country. He had, however, remained strictly neutral. At the time of Tryon's raids, the people of Stratford were panic-stricken. Knowing Johnson to be well acquainted with Tryon, they insisted that he should intercede with him to save their town from destruction. Johnson plainly said to them that such intercession would be useless. A town meeting was then called, at which resolutions were passed that Johnson and others should undertake this mission; upon which, believing himself legally bound as a townsman to obey the instructions of this all-potent assembly, he consented to do what he could, and drew up a paper to be signed by leading townsmen, who made the request in writing, and promised support and indemnity to himself and those who acted with him.

News of this proceeding was at once communicated to General Oliver Wolcott, who despatched



Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Dimon to Stratford. He summoned Johnson and others before him and subjected them to a rigid examination. It was reported to General Wolcott that though Johnson's words "were smoother than oil, yet they were very swords" in his replies to the questions of his examiners, as may well be imagined in view of his diplomatic experiences of ten years before in London.<sup>1</sup>

On receiving Colonel Dimon's report of the examination, General Wolcott ordered that Doctor Johnson be sent "under guard or otherwise" to the town of Farmington, to be delivered "to the care and custody of the civil authority of that town" to be kept "under such proper restraints as to prevent his having any correspondence with the enemy." Johnson was thus, to all intents and purposes, made a prisoner. He was, however, allowed to proceed to Farmington without a guard, on giving his word of honor that he would at once give himself up to the selectmen. On his arrival, these authorities found, on consultation among themselves, that they had no reason for detaining him. Johnson, though agreeing with them, proposed that he should be allowed to proceed under parole to the Governor and Council of Safety and, after stating his case, abide by their decision. Thus, probably for the first time in the four years of the war, Governor Trumbull met and doubtless entertained his old friend and correspondent, Doctor Johnson, under circumstances very different from

<sup>1</sup> See Wolcott papers in Connecticut Historical Society's manuscript collections.

those under which he had been accustomed to meet and correspond with him. Knowing Johnson's character as he did, there is no doubt that he placed implicit confidence in his statement, and regarded him in the same friendly light as in former times.

The meeting of the Council of Safety, by a bare majority, failed to agree with the legislative Council which voted to release Johnson. On the following day, July twenty-ninth, the Council of Safety met again. The Governor laid before the Council the papers in the case, Doctor Johnson appeared and was granted a hearing, and was at last allowed to return to his home at Stratford, with a letter to the civil authorities written by the Governor, stating that he was allowed to return by and with the advice of the Legislative Council and the Council of Safety.

From this time forward Doctor Johnson remained peacefully at his home in Stratford, carrying on his favorite literary pursuits until called upon to act as counsel for Connecticut in the Susquehanna case in 1782. In the critical times which followed, his native State could not dispense with his services, and his record as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 completes his long and honorable service to Connecticut in a way which honors his name.

The financial condition of the country continued, in the year 1779, to grow from bad to worse. In May the Continental Congress called upon the thirteen States to contribute the sum of forty-five million dollars to the general war fund. The amount apportioned to Connecticut was \$5,100,000

while Massachusetts had but \$6,000,000 as her share. During the entire year, it is stated that Congress called on Connecticut for the sum of \$8,500,000.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to determine the exact amount which the State paid under these calls; but we have it on the official statement of Governor Trumbull that during the year 1779 "this State raised nine millions eight hundred & sixteen thousand and fifty-six & one third dollars for Continental and State purposes."<sup>2</sup> Taxes were laid at the May session of the General Assembly to the extent of nineteen shillings to the pound, payable at three fixed dates. And owing to the rapid decrease in the value of paper money, higher rates were yet in prospect. To Trumbull, as to other statesmen of the day, the urgent need of a foreign loan was apparent. But the difficulty in negotiating a loan from a foreign country with no security but the justice of our cause and the good faith of the people was a serious difficulty indeed. Of all foreign nations Holland appeared the most eligible for this purpose, for reasons which need hardly be discussed here.

And of all the good friends of America in that resourceful little country, John Derk, Baron Van der Capellan, appeared best suited to advance her interest in Holland. His views in home politics were so liberal as to exclude him for four years from his seat in the Assembly, owing to his advocacy

<sup>1</sup> Stuart. "Life of Trumbull", p. 452.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Samuel Huntington, in Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 7th series, vol. 3, p. 62.

of the rights of the people of Holland, and his attempts to relieve them from feudal oppression. This nobleman was an intimate friend of Governor Trumbull's, and the correspondence between them had for some time been frequent. Among other suggestions, the good Baron had requested that the Governor should prepare and send to him, "a description of the present state and advantages of America; of the forms of government in its different republics; of the facility with which strangers can establish themselves, and find subsistence; of the price of lands both cultivated and unimproved; of cattle, provisions, etc.; with a succinct history of the present war, and the cruelties committed by the English. This," says the Baron, "would excite astonishment in a country where America is known but through the medium of gazettes."

Notwithstanding the constant and engrossing cares which his official duties imposed upon the Governor, he at once undertook the task of drawing up such a statement as the Baron Van der Capellan had suggested; and within a month had prepared a letter which a century and more later filled thirty large octavo pages in the printed Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. This document was duly forwarded to the Baron Van der Capellan by the Governor's good friend, President Henry Laurens. It was in due time received in Holland, and its contents carefully made known to the Baron's most influential acquaintances, resulting in liberal subscriptions by himself, his kinsmen and others to a loan to the United States of America.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that Governor Trumbull had in mind at about this time a plan for writing a history of the American Revolution, which for some reason he never carried to completion. Perhaps he contented himself at this advanced period of his life with leaving the work to be embodied in the more extended plan of a "General History of the United States of America" which his cousin, the Reverend Benjamin Trumbull, undertook to write at a later date, but which he did not live long enough to complete. In this undertaking Governor Trumbull urged his cousin to cover the entire period from the discovery of America to the close of the Revolution. But one volume of the three contemplated in this plan ever reached the printer. In view of the success attending the Governor's correspondence with the Baron Van der Capellan, he was doubtless impressed with the importance of acquainting distinguished foreigners with the true state of affairs in America. Probably with that motive he loaned to the Chevalier Anne-César de la Luzerne, minister from France to the United States, a manuscript which the Chevalier calls in his correspondence "a plan of the history of America." It appears, however, from mention made of this manuscript by the Marquis François Jean de Chastellux in his "*Voyages dans l'Amerique septentrionale*", quoting the Governor's own mention of it, that it was only the introduction to a history of the American Revolution, — "only a historical résumé, quite superficial, and not lacking in partiality in the manner in which the events of

the war are represented.” It is not surprising that to this criticism of the Governor’s historical writings this nobleman of the gay court of Louis XVI. should have added the following personal description:

“He is over seventy years old, his entire life is devoted to affairs, which he loves with a passion, whether they be great or small; or, rather, there are none for him of this latter class.”

Although the military operations of importance were now confined to the southern States, there were calls upon Connecticut to fill her quota of men, and active measures were taken to comply with these calls and to keep up the coast guard and local militia which might be needed at any time to defend the State from such invasions as she had suffered from during the year.

## CHAPTER XXIII

DISTRESSING CONDITIONS OF THE COUNTRY — FINANCIAL AFFAIRS AND MEASURES — CALLS ON CONNECTICUT — DEATH OF THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE — FRENCH HUSSARS QUARTERED AT LEBANON AND COLCHESTER — GOVERNOR APPOINTED TO SUPERVISE STATE FINANCES

**D**URING the year 1779 the calls on Connecticut for money and provisions for the Continental Army had been most urgent. Rhode Island, too, owing to the presence of an army within her narrow confines, had been reduced to the verge of famine, and much relief had been given her by her more fortunate neighbor. But the greater and carefully husbanded resources of Connecticut felt the strain, so that the most active measures of embargo and prevention of illicit trade were put in force. In money matters the State had found a slight, but temporary relief from the proceeds of prize vessels and cargoes brought in by State privateers and other war vessels; but this relief was only a drop in an empty bucket.

Early in 1780, distressing letters began to come from General Washington telling of a starving army on the verge of mutiny for lack of food and pay. Governor Trumbull found a new difficulty to contend with in his earnest attempts to afford relief. The farmers who had been selling cattle and provisions to the United States under contracts

with its commissaries had not received any payments for a year or more; and if they should receive the amounts now due them the value of the money would be less than half the sums their contracts called for, owing to the rapidly declining rates for continental bills. For this reason, the large dealers upon whom the commissaries depended were unable to replenish their stocks by purchases from the smaller farms, and were unwilling to run the risk of such delays in payment as they had already experienced. This situation was explained to Washington by Trumbull as fully and clearly as possible, with the added assurance that "whatever is in the power of this small State to effect for the salvation of the country will be executed with earnest pleasure."

And now begins an urgent correspondence of the Governor with the Connecticut delegates to Congress and with President Samuel Huntington, urging that measures be taken to pay the amounts due under commissaries' contracts, and suggesting to the delegates measures for "introducing a stable currency and medium of commerce", on the sound basis of contributions by taxation from the different States. The delays in the action of Congress in the important measures of supplying the army also bring out something more than suggestions from the Governor to the delegates and President. There was, no doubt, a complete agreement of opinion on the part of Trumbull with Washington when, at a later date, the latter wrote him:

"As I always speak to your Excellency in the confidence of friendship, I shall not scruple to con-



fess that the prevailing politics, for considerable time past, have filled me with inexpressible anxiety and apprehension, and have uniformly appeared to me to threaten the subversion of our independence. I hope a period to them is now arrived, and that a change of measures will save us from ruin.”<sup>1</sup>

It seems safe to say that a more formidable enemy than the British army at the beginning of the year 1780 was the continental paper money, which during the previous year had been issued to the extent of nearly \$150,000,000,<sup>2</sup> and was now so rapidly declining in purchasing power that Washington's statement was hardly an exaggeration when he said that a cartload of money was needed to buy a cartload of provisions. His statement that the financial condition of the country was “the only hope, the last resource of the enemy” need hardly be questioned here, though the financial condition of Great Britain was, at the same time, a matter of grave concern to her statesmen.

To meet the alarming crisis, the Continental Congress resorted to the expedient of a contraction of the currency by calling in and destroying the old issues, and by issuing new bills for one twentieth of the amount destroyed, these new bills having six years to run, and being payable, with interest at five per cent., in specie. To accomplish this measure, it became necessary to call upon the

<sup>1</sup> Washington to Trumbull, June 27, 1780. In Collections of Massachusetts Historical Society, vol. 10, 5th series.

<sup>2</sup> \$140,052,480. Bronson, “Connecticut Currency”, p. 114.

States for contributions of fifteen million dollars monthly in old Continental money for thirteen months. The measure was, to some extent, in accordance with Governor Trumbull's views, and he promptly laid the matter before the General Assembly at its April session. The delegates in Congress had written him, both officially and personally, urging that legislation be promptly had by Connecticut to carry out this measure. Appreciating, no doubt, the importance of relief by any measure on which Congress could agree, and fully informed by the Governor of the situation as stated by the Connecticut delegates, the General Assembly promptly passed "An Act for the Establishment of Public Credit, and to Provide for the Exigencies of this State", which provided unequivocally for meeting the requirements of Congress. So encouraging was the example of Connecticut in this time of gloom and despondency that Oliver Ellsworth writes to the Governor, under date of May ninth:

"I thought it my duty to read in Congress the accounts I had received from Connecticut, & was kept in countenance by their just approbation."

A month later he writes reporting encouraging progress by various States in adopting measures similar to those of Connecticut. It is hardly necessary to add that Connecticut provided for her share in this new measure by laying taxes, as usual in such cases.

The exigencies of the times were such the Congress thought it necessary to call upon the States

for provisions at fixed values in addition to the money called for. The share of Connecticut in this call was 78,400 hundredweight of beef, 1011 bushels of salt, 68,558 gallons of rum, and 500 tons of hay. Measures were duly enacted to supply these provisions. The share of the State in the money called for was \$1,700,000, monthly in continental money, or at the rate of one dollar in specie to forty dollars of continental money. This was one ninth of the whole amount called for by Congress, — a large proportion for a small State. The payment of this amount entitled the State to issue bills to the extent of one twentieth of the continental money contributed, which bills were to be guaranteed by the United States, and were payable, with interest at five per cent. at the expiration of six years, in Spanish milled dollars. So slow, however, were the officials in the mechanical part of this undertaking that Connecticut could not wait for the guarantee of the United States, and issued bills of a similar kind on the sole credit of the State, leaving the new continental guarantee for future adjustment. Thus, for the first time since 1776, and for the last time during the war, was paper money issued by the State, and provided for, as usual, by taxation.

In this time of stress, news comes to the Governor by a letter from the Chevalier de la Luzerne, which is in one way joyous news and in another way grievous. On the seventeenth of May, the Chevalier writes to the Governor that a fleet is nearly due from France, bringing a large body of French troops

to reinforce the Americans and that Connecticut is expected to furnish fresh provisions for them. The terms of purchase, however, form a pleasing contrast to the custom of delayed payments which the United States had established; for the agent for France comes furnished with good bills of exchange to the extent of about \$16,000, and with authority to provide cash payment or bills of exchange for any balance which this first installment does not cover. At the same time comes a letter from Washington, urging the Governor to prompt compliance with this request, so that our allies may find on arrival that every exertion has been made to meet their needs. One thousand oxen and twelve hundred sheep form the first requisition for the allies, in addition to which three hundred good horses are also wanted. These animals were collected as fast as possible, and held in pasture near the coast, awaiting the arrival of the French troops from Newport, on their way through Connecticut.

Although this comparatively small purchase was made on a cash basis, it was found necessary, in the following July, to lend to the French commissioner, Louis Dominique Ethis de Corny, the sum of £20,000 in the new bills of Connecticut, to be replaced on the arrival of funds from France, which subsequently proved to be very slow in coming.

In addition to this new call on the State for money and provisions, demands of all kinds from all quarters are constantly pressing upon the Governor. Even transportation for such supplies as Quartermaster-general Greene has ready to send

to the front cannot be had for lack of money and lack of credit; and the Governor is earnestly appealed to by General Greene to furnish money for this purpose, with which request he complies, at a cost of £1020. A month later, and Washington, expecting an attack on West Point, urges for a supply of salted provisions and live cattle to be immediately sent forward to that important stronghold, to provide against a siege. Within a week from the receipt of this letter the provisions are on the way. A week later two thousand men are drafted from the militia of Connecticut, and ordered forward as a reinforcement for West Point, at Washington's request.

Added to this particular and promptly rendered service come calls from Baron Steuben for arms, and from other quarters for ammunition and clothing. And throughout all this time of strain and anxiety, the Governor and Council of Safety were continually confronted with the fact that enlistments were more difficult than ever before, notwithstanding bounties which seemed princely to the plain farmers and others.

The war had now been actively waged for five years. Discouraging news was coming from the south; Charleston had fallen, and it was supposed by Washington that Sir Henry Clinton, flushed with victory, would soon appear before West Point, as good generalship would lead him to do. Fortunately, he did not seize this golden opportunity, and later even the treachery of Arnold failed to place this important stronghold in his grasp. But with the

continual disasters in the southern campaign, resulting from the utter inefficiency of Gates, who had been placed in command by Congress, the gloom continued; and with the blockading of the French allies at Newport soon after their arrival, and of the second installment at Brest before leaving France, the aid from that powerful ally was, for the time being, neutralized, and the apathy of despair seemed to settle upon the people.

But in the time when everything seemed darkest, no tinge of despair is to be found in Governor Trumbull's letters to Washington and others. On the contrary, these letters breathe the utmost hopefulness, telling of good stores of supplies to be drawn from the old Provision State, and of the belief that its quota of men for the army will soon be completed; and reiterating the abiding religious faith which sustains him in every time of need. At the same time, no details of useful expedients for carrying on the good fight are disregarded, and he suggests concerted and systematic action by the New England States in forwarding supplies. These measures formed the principal business of the Boston convention of August, 1780, and the Hartford convention of the November following.

In the midst of the harassing and perplexing cares of this year, a sad bereavement was added to the gloom of political and military affairs. On May 29, 1780, the Governor's wife, Faith, died. Thus was severed a marriage tie of forty-five years, during which time he had enjoyed the love and sympathy of this devoted wife. Her health had

been feeble for some years. Two years and more before her death, we find her son Jonathan Junior writing to his father at Hartford:

"24th Feb. 1778. . . . My mother has been exceeding lame, occasioned I suppose by cold, could scarcely move yesterday; is somewhat better."

Although apparently for some years an invalid, it is to be believed from all we can learn of her firm and devoted character that she bore up bravely under her sufferings, and never lost sight of her duties as wife and mother. A sketch of her parentage and ancestry, with some mention of her personal character, has been given in an early chapter of this biography. To Washington and to Gates, Trumbull wrote conveying the sad news of his loss, and from Washington he received the following condolence in prompt response:

"I most sincerely condole with your Excellency on the late severe stroke which you have met with in your family. Although calamities of this kind are what we should all be prepared to expect, yet few, upon their arrival, are able to bear them with becoming fortitude. Your determination, however, to seek assistance from the Great Disposer of all human events is highly laudable, and is the source from whence the truest consolation is to be drawn.

"I am, with greatest affection, respect and esteem,  
Dear sir,

"Your most obedient and humble servant,  
"G<sup>a</sup> Washington."

Many tributes were paid in the public press and

elsewhere to her patriotism, benevolence, and Christian virtues.

On the stone marking her burial place in the family tomb at Lebanon, the following inscription may still be read:

“Sacred to the memory of Madam Faith Trumbull, the amiable lady of Gov. Trumbull. Born at Duxbury, Mass., A.D. 1718. Happy and beloved in her connubial state, she lived a virtuous, charitable and Christian life at Lebanon, in Connecticut, and died lamented by numerous friends, A.D. 1780, aged 62 years.”

Towards the close of this gloomy year it was found necessary to call upon Connecticut for winter quarters for the French hussars of Lauzun’s legion, since the exorbitant prices of forage and other supplies at Newport made this step necessary. Quarters were provided at Lebanon and Colchester, and the Governor’s son David, with Jeremiah Wadsworth and Jedediah Elderkin, were appointed to provide barracks for these troops. The feelings of the gay Duc de Lauzun on changing from the congenial surroundings of Newport to the strange surroundings of Lebanon are described, with all the extravagance of a Frenchman of the eighteenth century, in the memoirs of the Duke himself. He says:

“I left for Lebanon on the 10th of November. We had not yet had letters from France. Siberia alone can be compared to Lebanon, which is only composed of cabins scattered through immense forests.”



The presence of these French troops at Lebanon was no doubt a matter of great social importance to that little town, and has been so gracefully and impressively mentioned by Donald G. Mitchell, that a quotation from him will best describe the scene and the men:

“And what a contrast it is, this gay young nobleman, carved out, as it were, from the dissolute age of Louis XV., who had sauntered under the colonnades of the Trianon, and had kissed the hand of the Pompadour, now strutting among the staid dames of Norwich and Lebanon! How they must have looked at him and his fine troopers from under their knitted hoods! You know, I suppose, his after history; how he went back to Paris, and among the wits there was wont to mimic the way in which the stiff old Connecticut Governor had said grace at his table. Ah, he did not know that in Governor Trumbull, and in all such men, is the material to found an enduring State; and in himself, and all such men, only the inflammable material to burn one down. There is a life written of Governor Trumbull, and there is a life written of the Marquis of Lauzun. The first is full of deeds of quiet heroism, ending with a tranquil and triumphant death; the other is full of rankest gallantries, and ends with a little spurt of blood under the knife of the guillotine upon the gay Place de la Concorde.”<sup>1</sup>

Governor Trumbull's acquaintance with distinguished Frenchmen did not begin at Lebanon on

<sup>1</sup> Address at the bi-centennial celebration of the settlement of Norwich, Connecticut.

the arrival of the Duc de Lauzun; for in the previous September he had met Count Rochambeau, Admiral Ternay and Lafayette at Hartford, in the first conference which they held with Washington, Knox and others. Their reception at Hartford was a brilliant affair for these stringent times, though Quartermaster Nehemiah Hubbard was obliged to apply to the Governor for funds to meet the expenses of the entertainment, which amounted to £345, a sum which the Council of Safety readily granted, to meet the requisition which the Governor had issued. The conference at Hartford had no particular effect upon the military campaign at this time, although it gave an opportunity for an exchange of views between the military leaders, in which, no doubt, Governor Trumbull contributed valuable information and advice.

An important duty entrusted to the Governor by the General Assembly towards the close of this year 1780 was the supervision of the financial affairs of the State. In order to show what was expected of him, it seems necessary to quote the resolution adopted regarding this matter at the session of November 29th:

“Resolved: That his Excellency the Governor be, and he is hereby empowered and requested to superintend the subject of finance in this State until the sessions of the Assembly in May next; to examine into the state of the public debts and credits, to make the proper estimates of the amount of public expenditures made and wanted, and of the ways and means already provided, and what will be

raised by the same, and to superintend and direct the treasury, that effectual measures may be forthwith taken, that all arrearages of public taxes from the respective towns be forthwith paid up and settled; also to superintend the Pay Table, and find out the true state of the public accounts therein, so that a true state of the public finances may be fairly, truly and plainly laid before the Assembly at said sessions."

In addition to this he was also empowered to employ assistants, and to negotiate a loan on the credit of the State in Europe or America, not exceeding £200,000, for seven to twenty years at six per cent. interest.

## CHAPTER XXIV

CONTINUED GLOOM — IMPRISONMENT OF COLONEL JOHN TRUMBULL — HIS RELEASE AND RETURN — CONTINUED CALLS FOR PROVISIONS FOR THE ARMY — THE WETHERSFIELD CONFERENCE — THE GOVERNOR AND COUNCIL GO TO DANBURY — THE YORKTOWN CAMPAIGN — THE GROTON MASSACRE — THE SURRENDER OF CORNWALLIS

**I**F the dark days of 1776 and 1777 were the “times that tried men’s souls”, the days of 1780 were no less dark, after four years more of the stress and strain of war, during a series of reverses and defeats under the miserably incompetent management of Gates at the south, where the only active military campaign of the year was in progress. Arnold’s treason had added to the gloom of the year, and only an abiding faith in the righteousness of his country’s cause sustained the venerable Governor of Connecticut in these dark days, through which he constantly toiled and hoped and prayed as ever.

The year 1781 opened in the thickest gloom. A starving army, ill-clad and unpaid, began the year with mutiny. Two Pennsylvania regiments left camp in January to demand from Congress a redress of their wrongs. The affair resulted in the killing of two of their officers who attempted to control them, and in rioting and bloodshed. How

far the mutiny might extend among other troops was a serious question. Never before had such urgently repeated calls come from Washington to Governor Trumbull for money to pay the soldiers; for food and for clothing. These urgent calls were continued almost incessantly for the first six months of the year, and longer. General Knox was sent by Washington to New England in January, and visited Governor Trumbull and his Council in person, explaining to them more effectively than even the letters of Washington could explain the dire need of provisions and supplies of all kinds.

While this most alarming situation was calling for the utmost exertions on the part of the Governor, and was causing him the greatest anxiety and perplexity, a personal anxiety was also constantly staring him in the face. In November, 1780, his son John, while pursuing his art studies in London, was arrested and imprisoned under charge of "the crime of high treason." He had been assured of protection against such procedure by Lord George Germaine; the sole precaution being that he must shun the smallest indiscretion, and avoid "political intervention." But on November 15, 1780, the news of the execution of André had reached London; and owing to Colonel Trumbull's previous rank of Deputy Adjutant General in the American army, it seemed, as he says in his autobiography, that he would "make a perfect pendant", André having been Deputy Adjutant General in the British army. The arrest was made at the instigation of Benjamin Thompson, afterwards Count Rumford.

The news of this arrest probably reached Governor Trumbull in the following January, 1781. Although the proceeding was in direct violation of the proclamation made by his Majesty's Commissioners in America in 1778, there was much cause for anxiety as well as indignation. For nearly seven months Colonel Trumbull was imprisoned; and it was only after repeated efforts on the part of Benjamin West, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Charles James Fox, Edmund Burke, and others of equal or greater influence, that he was at last released. An appeal to law was out of the question, owing to the suspension of the habeas corpus act; and thus the indignity of imprisonment had to be borne for this long time as best he could bear it. From certain indications of his pride and force of character in other instances we may well imagine that he chafed under the treatment, though he continued to pursue his studies in art with unabated zeal. From letters of Messrs. John de Neufville and Sons of Amsterdam, his father seems to have received the fullest particulars regarding his imprisonment and the prospects of his release. It was not, however, an unconditional release when it came, for it carried with it the condition that he should depart from Great Britain within thirty days, and should not return until peace should be declared. Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley became his sureties in a bond for two hundred pounds for carrying out this condition. He was thus enabled to go at once to Amsterdam, where under the auspices of the friendly mercantile house

of John de Neufville and Son he endeavored to assist his father in negotiating a loan of £200,000 for the State of Connecticut. From this place long letters to his father give interesting accounts of the political situation in Holland, and show quite plainly that the time was unfavorable for effecting a loan. John Adams happened to be in Amsterdam at the time, and from him Colonel Trumbull learned that he had met with no success in negotiating a loan for the United States, and believed it useless to make any further attempts in Holland. Following his example, Colonel Trumbull gave up the attempt, and soon embarked for his native land, which he reached in January, 1782, after a narrow escape from shipwreck, reembarking at Bilboa.

Thus the Governor had the disappointment of learning that the attempt which the General Assembly had authorized him to make for a foreign loan of £200,000 was unsuccessful and impossible; and that the injustice done to his son had seriously affected the young man's progress in the pursuit of his chosen profession. A severe illness followed after his arrival at his home in Lebanon, after recovering from which the necessities of the case obliged him to join his brother in supervising contracts for the commissary department of the army. After peace was declared he again took up his life work as an artist, the decision being reached after a consultation with his father which he describes as follows:

“My father again urged the law, as a profession

which in a republic leads to all emolument and distinction, and for which my early education had well prepared me. My reply was, that so far as I understood the question, law was rendered necessary by the vices of mankind—that I had already seen too much of them, willingly to devote my life to a profession which would keep me perpetually involved, either in the defense of innocence against fraud and injustice, or (what was much more revolting to an ingenuous mind) to the protection of guilt against just and merited punishment. In short, I pined for the arts, and entered into an elaborate defense of my predilection, and again dwelt upon the honors paid to artists in the glorious days of Greece and Athens. My father listened patiently, and when I had finished, he complimented me on the able manner in which I had defended what to him still appeared to be a bad cause. ‘I had confirmed his opinion,’ he said, that with proper study I should make a respectable lawyer; ‘but,’ added he, ‘you must give me leave to say that you appear to have overlooked, or forgotten, one important point in your case.’ ‘Pray sir,’ I rejoined, ‘what was that?’ ‘You appear to forget, sir, that *Connecticut is not Athens*’; and with this pithy remark, he bowed and withdrew, and never more opened his lips on the subject.”

Among the urgent letters sent by Washington during the first half of the year 1781 is a letter of the tenth of May in which he says:

“From the post of Saratoga to that of Dobbs’ Ferry inclusive I believe there is not (by the returns



and reports made to me) at this moment one day's supply of meat for the army on hand. . . .

"I have now only to repeat the alternative which has been so often urged, that supplies, particularly of *beef cattle*, must be speedily and regularly provided, or our posts cannot be maintained, nor the army kept in the field much longer."

Two weeks after this alarming letter the famous Wethersfield conference is held. The plan of campaign agreed upon at the house of Joseph Webb in Wethersfield makes this probably the most important conference held during the war. It appears to have been entirely a military conference, in which Washington and Rochambeau were respectively the American and French leaders, conferring with Generals Knox and Duportail and the Marquis de Chastellux.

Washington at once writes Trumbull, telling the result of this conference, which was at the time solely a plan for the reduction and occupation of New York, where the British forces were then weakened by sending much needed reinforcements to the south to retrieve, if possible, the losses occasioned by the superb generalship of Greene. Even Washington, conscious as he was of Greene's military genius, could not foresee the far-reaching results of the campaign which that great general was so brilliantly and successfully conducting.

The plan of the Wethersfield conference called urgently for men from Connecticut to be in the field by the first of July, in order to coöperate with the French troops in the taking of New York,

before the possible return of the British from the south, which return did not take place, since Greene kept them actively employed. By the ninth of July we find Governor Trumbull at Lebanon, from which place he writes Washington:

“ . . . I intend to remain at home till the troops are forwarded from hence, then to remove to Hartford to promote the hastening on the fresh beef and other supplies; and should it appear necessary and expedient, shall remove further westward with an Executive Council about me to promote everything needful that is in our power. My great object is to forward our troops, and by the most strenuous exertions to feed the army that they be not reduced to any disagreeable necessities.”

In order to be nearer to the scene of military operations, and to expedite the payment of the soldiers, Governor Trumbull in the following month of August set out for Danbury, thus carrying out a plan already suggested by Washington of holding the meetings of his Council near the scene of action, and encouraging the troops by his presence, and by the welcome payment of a portion, at least, of their much needed wages. According to the meager entries in the Governor's diary at this time, we learn that his sojourn at Danbury partook of the nature of a military encampment. Guards were set at night, owing, no doubt, to threats of personal violence to the Governor, which he himself records in his diary in the following words:

“At Newtown one said he would kill me as quick as he would a Rattle Snake.”

The sudden change of plan in military operations prevented a visit of the Governor to Washington at headquarters, in acceptance of an invitation from the latter before the arrival of the Governor and his Council at Danbury. The stay at this place occupied about a fortnight in the month of August, during which time the plan of the great and glorious Yorktown campaign developed. On the twenty-second of August a circular letter was issued by Washington disclosing to the various governors of the eastern States the plan of campaign, and urging that the quotas of these States be immediately filled to reinforce General Heath, who had been left in command of the forces before New York.

The gloom with which the year opened was soon to be transformed to brilliancy through the combined efforts of the two great generals, Washington and Greene; for on the very day when Washington was issuing the circular letter just referred to, Greene had begun the march which resulted in the battle of Eutaw Springs, the effect of which was to keep the British cooped up in Charleston to the end of the war. Long before this, the slow means of communication had brought the news of the glorious victory of January seventeenth at Cowpens, of March fifteenth at Guilford Court House, and of the evacuation of Camden by the British on the tenth of May. It is not to be supposed that these victories, important as they were, could be fully appreciated in distant New England at the time. Cheering though the news may have been, it formed only

a slight relief to the gloom in which New England was shrouded.

On the twenty-second of August, as we have seen, the Yorktown campaign had been fully planned, and the "old continentals in their ragged regimentals" were joining with the gorgeously uniformed French troops in the swift and brilliant march towards Yorktown, the result of which was to end, two years later, the long, weary struggle of eight years. So swift and so boldly and brilliantly planned was this movement that Sir Henry Clinton was entirely hoodwinked, and did not open his eyes to the situation until it was far too late to attempt to intercept Washington. Racking his brains to plan a counter-movement of some kind, he decided upon an attack on the Connecticut coast, though even he must have known that such a movement could not possibly divert Washington from the plan of the Yorktown campaign, which had already progressed farther and more successfully than Clinton himself was aware of in those days of slow communication.

In pursuance of his plan, Clinton placed under command of the traitor Arnold an expedition destined for New London, whose spacious harbor was defended by a small battery on the New London side known as Fort Trumbull, and a much more formidable fort on the Groton side known as Fort Griswold. The garrison of the New London battery, consisting of twenty-three men, after firing a broadside at Arnold's forces, spiked their guns, and retreated in boats across the harbor to reinforce the small garrison of Fort Griswold. Against this fort

a body of some eight hundred of the British, having landed on the Groton side of the harbor, marched with the expectation of an easy victory.

After passing Fort Trumbull, Arnold proceeded with about one thousand men to the more thickly settled portion of New London, where about one hundred and twenty-five buildings were quickly reduced to ashes. At Fort Griswold, on the opposite side, about one hundred and fifty determined men had gathered. Unconditional surrender was demanded by the British commander, Colonel Eyre, accompanied by the threat that if this demand was not complied with, "martial law" would be put in force, meaning that no quarter would be given to the survivors after the fort was taken. To this Colonel William Ledyard sent the prompt reply, "We will not surrender, let the consequences be what they may." The British, to the number of eight hundred or more, immediately advanced to take the fort by storm, but were met by a brave and stubborn resistance on the part of the hundred and fifty men who had hastily gathered for the defense, and who held the fort for nearly an hour, inflicting severe losses upon the enemy. At last a breach was made, and the British came pouring in on the east side of the fort. Colonel Ledyard, seeing that further resistance was useless, ordered his men to lay down their arms. On presenting his own sword as a token of surrender to the British officer supposed to be in command, the brute seized the weapon and plunged it in the breast of the brave Ledyard. This appeared to be a signal for indis-

criminate butchery of the defenseless men who had laid down their arms. Of this brave little band but eight or ten escaped unhurt.

After burning the village of Groton, the British hastily took to their ships, as the militia began to gather from adjoining and near-by towns. An official return shows that they reëmbarked with two hundred and twenty men killed, wounded or missing, a loss caused by one hundred and fifty determined defenders of Fort Griswold.

Comment on this brutal massacre seems hardly necessary. It is doubtless true that the survival of a medieval custom still made it a part of the code of European warfare that no quarter should be given to the garrison of a captured stronghold; and it is true that the British commander had warned the Americans that this custom would be enforced. The code had, however, always been "honored in the breach" by the Americans, as in the case of Stony Point, and both European and American civilization were, or should have been, far beyond observing it. It cannot fail to stand as a blot on the record of British warfare in the Revolution which has hardly a parallel in the history of the war.

At the time of this massacre Governor Trumbull was at Hartford, where he received the news. He promptly ordered General Spencer to the scene with such troops as could be mustered, and sent at once to General Heath at headquarters to obtain such detailed information of the affair as could be procured. This information he at once

communicated to General Washington. He corresponded with Governor Greene of Rhode Island, urging coöperation to resist further attacks of the enemy on the shores of the two States. Measures were also taken for the relief of the inhabitants of Groton and New London, many of whom had lost all they possessed. The condition of many widowed mothers and fatherless children called for speedier help than the slow movements of the General Assembly could give, and a "brief" was issued for charitable donations to relieve their immediate wants. Governor Trumbull also applied to Washington for a detachment of the French fleet to protect the coast of Connecticut, but the application came too late, as the fleet had left the country.

During these anxious days cheering news was reaching the Governor through letters from his son Jonathan, who was at this time at Yorktown in the capacity of secretary to General Washington. He had been appointed to this position on the sixteenth of the previous April, succeeding Colonel Robert Hanson Harrison, who had served in that capacity since 1776.<sup>1</sup> The letters of the son to his father report in some detail the operations in progress at Yorktown from the twenty-third of September to the nineteenth of October, the day after the final surrender of Cornwallis. This glorious news was the culmination of many cheering reports from the younger Jonathan, in which he men-

<sup>1</sup> Stuart's statement that he succeeded Alexander Hamilton appears to be incorrect. See Letter of Washington appointing Trumbull, April 16, Sparks, 8, 14.

tions also Greene's brilliant victories at the south. In the meager diary of the Governor in which during his busy days he briefly jots down leading events, we read:

“Friday, October 26th. About 7 o’clo. in the eveg rec<sup>d</sup> the hand Bill from D. Govr Bower, of the surrender of Ld Cornwallis & his army — 9000 men, seamen included — quantity of Warlike Stores — one 40 gun ship — 1 frigate — about one hundred Transports. Praised be the Lord of Hosts!”



## CHAPTER XXV

NEED OF CONTINUED WAR-FOOTING — DEANE'S VIEWS  
— MEASURES FOR DEFENSE — PLOTS AGAINST THE  
GOVERNOR — HIS VINDICATION — FINAL DECISION OF  
THE SUSQUEHANNA CASE — SUBSEQUENT EVENTS IN  
WYOMING

THE rejoicing of the Governor which has just been quoted from his diary is unique as an entry in that very slight journal which he was doubtless too busy to make more elaborate. To Washington he wrote, sending his warmest congratulations, speaking of the victory at Yorktown as "an event which cannot fail to strengthen the impressions of European powers in favor of the great and good cause, in which you have so long and successfully contended, and go far to convince the haughty King of Great Britain, that it is in vain to persevere in his cruel and infamous purpose of enslaving a people, who can boast of Generals and armies that neither fear to meet his veterans in the high places of the field, or pursue them to the strongholds of security, and for whose help the arm of the Almighty has been made bare, and his salvation rendered gloriously conspicuous; — an event which will hasten the wished-for happy period, when your Excellency may retire to and securely possess the sweets of domestic felicity and

glorious rest from the toils of war, surrounded by the universal applause of a free, grateful and happy people."

To these sentiments Washington replied under date of the twenty-eighth of November:

"I most earnestly hope that this event may be productive of all those happy consequences which your Excellency mentions; and I think that its good effects cannot fail to be very extensive, unless from a mistaken idea of the magnitude of this success unhappily a spirit of remissness should seize the minds of the States, and they should set themselves down in quiet with a delusive hope of the contest being brought to a close. I hope this may not be the case. To prevent so great an evil shall be the study of my winter's endeavor; and I cannot but flatter myself that the States, instead of relaxing in their exertions, will be stimulated to the most vigorous preparations for another active, glorious, and decisive campaign, which if properly prosecuted will, I trust, under the smiles of Heaven, bring us to the end of this long and tedious war, and sit us down in the full security of the great object of our toils, — the complete establishment of peace, liberty, and independence."

To Rochambeau Governor Trumbull also wrote, expressing his gratitude for the assistance which France had rendered in achieving this glorious victory. This letter was promptly acknowledged, with expressions of high esteem.

Quite different was a correspondence with Silas

Deane into which the Governor found himself obliged to enter, owing to Deane's request that his views should be submitted to the General Assembly of Connecticut. The long letter which he wrote in explanation of these views was dated at Ghent on the twenty-first of October. Briefly stated, it was the presentation of arguments for the United States to make peace with Great Britain, regardless of the treaty of alliance with France, which nation Deane believed to be gaining a position in which she could oppress us more grievously than the Mother Country ever had done or would do. This letter came at a most inopportune time for accomplishing its purpose. When it reached its destination the country was rejoicing over the surrender of Cornwallis, and was filled with gratitude to our French allies for making that surrender possible. Governor Trumbull's reply, temperate yet decisive in tone, was unanimously adopted by both houses of the General Assembly, and duly forwarded to Deane, who was regarded with suspicion at the time. Replying to his suggestions of disregarding the treaty with France, and stopping the burdensome expenditures of our country by bringing the war to a close through negotiations with Great Britain, the Governor says:

"No, I will sooner consent to load myself, my constituents, my posterity with a debt equal to the whole property of the country than consent to a measure so detestably infamous, and I doubt not but my countrymen in general will choose with me to preserve their liberties with the reputation and

consciousness of preserving virtue, even tho' poverty be the consequence." <sup>1</sup>

With the views of Washington to keep up the army until peace should be definitely determined, Governor Trumbull fully agreed, and exerted himself, as he had in the darkest days, to bring up the quota of Connecticut to its maximum. It appears by the records of the January session of 1782 that the quota was reported to the General Assembly as filled, and that measures were taken for the defense of the Connecticut coast and the towns bordering on New York.

During the two previous years, Trumbull had experienced a taste of the ingratitude of a budding republic by failing to receive a majority of the votes of the people. In 1780 the popular vote was 3598 in his favor and 3668 in favor of other candidates. The General Assembly, as provided by law, promptly elected him Governor by a vote of 107 in his favor to nine against him. In the following year, the vote of the General Assembly is thus recorded: Trumbull, 104; William Pitkin, 7; Oliver Wolcott, 5; Samuel Huntington, 5; Richard Law, 1.

If the newspapers of the day had been in the habit of discussing the political situations and tactics of State campaigns as they do at the present time, we should doubtless be able to explain fully the opposition to Governor Trumbull's reelection

<sup>1</sup> Although this letter was generally approved by members of Congress and by Washington, it was later hoped that no answer would be sent to Deane, as silence would appear more dignified and afford less opportunity for misconstruction. Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 7th series, vol. 3, p. 365.

and the methods and arguments of this opposition. The small weekly newspapers of the day are provokingly silent on this subject, so that the almost secret political methods employed lack the description and explanation which would be most satisfactory in the present instance. But if there were no "yellow journals" to malign him publicly, the tavern-haunters and tavern scandal-mongers answered this purpose in his time as effectively as the "yellow journals" serve similar purposes in the present time.

The schemes for removing Trumbull from the governorship of Connecticut were believed, at the time, to be the work of the enemy. The lies which were circulated regarding him were mainly in connection with that same illicit trade with the enemy which he, of all men, had done everything in his power to punish and prevent. There can be no doubt, too, that his steadfast and unwearied attempts to provide for the needs of the army, and his policy of meeting the heavy and burdensome expenses of his State by taxation had caused criticisms at least, from those who felt the burden most keenly. Then, too, the aspirations of other candidates for an office which Trumbull had held for thirteen years doubtless had something to do with the opposition which had developed. Thus, from a position where, after overcoming the early opposition to his candidacy, he had so established himself in the hearts of the freemen of Connecticut that it became "a rare thing to see a counting of votes" <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hartford Courant*, April 2, 1782.

for Governor, we find him, at the advanced age of seventy-three, the victim of slander and of jealousy and political ferment as a reward for his tireless, single-hearted, patriotic services.

Legitimate, outspoken opposition, if it existed, was something he was ready and willing to meet with his usual candor and calmness; but the methods of the slanderer and traducer were so galling to him that he at last took measures to expose them to the light of day. Among these methods were the exposing in public in New York of cases of goods, supposed to contain articles of illicit trade, plainly marked with his name, . . . "and they have been frequently seen to send them on board vessels bound eastward, in so much that our officers in captivity among them have been induced to believe his Excellency was actually concerned, and many were not undeceived, till they were exchanged, and came out, and enquired into the truth of the matter."<sup>1</sup>

Proceedings of this kind were supplemented by the appearance of a "stranger from Middletown" at Enfield, where, in a tavern, in the presence of a number of people, he made the statement that "a vessel which belonged to his Excellency the Governor, and which was employed in carrying on illicit trade, had lately been taken coming from the enemy loaded with goods, and that she was brought into one of the ports of Connecticut for condemnation."<sup>2</sup> The story of course spread and grew as such stories will, and at last reached the notice of the Governor

<sup>1</sup> *Hartford Courant*, April 2, 1783.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart, "Life of Trumbull", p. 566.

himself, through a correspondent. He lost no time in addressing the General Assembly on the subject, under date of January 29, 1782. It seems necessary to quote this address in full, as showing his attitude:

“To the Honorable General Assembly now sitting:

“A member of the honorable House of Representatives handed to me a letter of the 21<sup>st</sup> inst, which is herewith offered for your Observation, and opens the occasion of this address.

“Perhaps no person in the United States was earlier apprised than myself of the origin and insidious design of our enemies to set on foot and carry on a trade and commerce with this and the other States for the manufactures and merchandise of their country, or more deeply sensible of its dangerous and pernicious effects — and I am persuaded that no one has been or could be more active and vigilant to prevent the execution of that ensnaring and ruinous project; and during my administration my whole time has been devoted to and intent upon the Salvation of my Country, and the defence of its inestimable rights against the open force and more dangerous secret fraud of our implacable and restless enemy. My character and conduct in these respects, I am happy to believe, meets the approbation of all the true Friends in this State in proportion to their knowledge and acquaintance with them, and are not unknown throughout all these States, and in Europe. Pardon me, Gentlemen, I am far from boasting; I have not done more, but less than my duty, and it is my highest temporal wish to do much more good to

my State and Country, and to see its Liberty and Independence established on a firm and immovable basis.

“But who can stand against the secret and malignant whispers of envy and falsehood, which like the pestilence walk in darkness? My Character is dearer to me than all worldly instruments, or the remains of a life so far spent and exhausted in the service of my country. For several years past, accumulated and increasing slanders, similar to the present, have been whispered and directly spread and propagated concerning me by the radical Enemies of our Country’s cause, by deceived or malicious persons, or all, as I must believe. Conscientious innocence and integrity have enabled me calmly to bear them;—and in my circumstances I have not thought it prudent to seek a legal redress, although in some instances, I could easily have traced the Slanders to their Authors—and my neglecting to seek such redress has to my knowledge been construed as an acknowledgment of Guilt. If indeed I am guilty or have any connexions with a conduct so contrary to the Laws and interests of my Country, and which I profess from my heart to detest and abhor, is it not high time it was known, and for me to be spurned from your confidence and trust? The author of the present report may be brought to your View—the way is open for it.

“Permit me to ask, if I am and have been thus guilty, whether *your* honor, wisdom, and integrity, or all are not also affected, while by your suffrages



I hold a station too important for even a suspected person to fill — whether under all the circumstances, it may not become the honor and dignity of this Virtuous Assembly to inquire into and investigate the truth or falsehood of the facts alledged, and let my guilt, if it appears, be fully exposed? It is my wish — but it is cheerfully submitted to the Wisdom and justice of the Honorable Assembly by their faithful, obedient, humble servant,  
“Jonathan Trumbull.

“Hartford, January 29th, 1782.”

The General Assembly, in compliance with the Governor's wish, at once appointed a committee to investigate the matter. This committee consisted of four members of the Lower House, with Oliver Wolcott of the Upper House as chairman. After a full investigation they reported “that all reports of that kind respecting his Excellency are false, slanderous and altogether groundless, and that they most probably originate from the Partisans and Emissaries of the Enemy that are secretly among the people, and that those kind of Reports, tho' intended to injure his Excellency's private character, are designed principally to embarrass Government, and sow the seeds of Jealousy and Distress in the minds of the people, with a View to remove out of the way a Character that is so firmly opposed to every Measure that is favorable to the enemy. And tho' we have not been able to discover the Author of this slanderous Report, we are inclined to believe him to be an Emissary of the Enemy.”

In the following election of May, 1782, Governor Trumbull was once more chosen by the vote of the people. It was, as we shall see, by his own choice, the last year but one of his long, arduous and faithful public service; and his reëlection by popular vote left him the satisfaction of the most complete vindication.

Although no fighting of any consequence ensued after the surrender of Cornwallis, the year after that event was one of solicitude, anxiety and continued hard work for the Governor and his Council. The importance of maintaining a war footing was something which it seemed next to impossible to impress upon the people. Though the General Assembly was informed that the quota of Connecticut was filled, the returns from the army as reported by Washington to Trumbull showed, as in the cases of other States, a considerable lack of a quota in the service. In the meantime rumors of negotiations for peace were actively circulated by the enemy and eagerly received by the people, to such an extent as to create strong suspicions that such rumors were intended to prevent enlistments, with a view, on the part of the enemy, to new military movements.

Soon after the adoption of the Articles of Confederation in 1781, Pennsylvania availed herself of the provisions of these articles by applying to Congress to appoint a court to decide the long contested Susquehanna case. Allowing no time for Connecticut to send to England for important papers applying to this case, as requested by her

counsel, Congress granted the request of Pennsylvania, and appointed commissioners to act in the matter. Once more Governor Trumbull had to review this case, and to conduct an active correspondence with the Connecticut delegates regarding it; and once more Connecticut called on William Samuel Johnson to act as one of the attorneys in the case.<sup>1</sup> The hearing occupied forty-one days, and was held at Trenton, New Jersey, and the decision, no reasons for which have ever seen the light, was "unanimous" in denying the claim of Connecticut to the Wyoming Valley.

Of the subsequent legislative proceedings to which this very peculiar decision gave rise it is hardly necessary to speak in this connection. Conjecture alone can suggest how far Governor Trumbull may have been informed of the prospect of a grant of land in Ohio, which after his death was called the Western Reserve, as a tacit compensation for the loss of Wyoming. That the decision of the Susquehanna case did not coincide with his views of judicial procedure we may still more easily imagine.

But the hardships and sufferings which Connecticut settlers in the beautiful Wyoming Valley experienced were by no means ended by the decision of the Susquehanna case. Fierce local jealousy was engendered among the Pennsylvanians by the mere fact that Connecticut Yankees were peaceably occupying land which they had a perfect right to occupy under the jurisdiction of Pennsylvania. This local jealousy led, in the early spring of 1784,

<sup>1</sup> The other attorneys were Eliphalet Dyer and Jesse Root.

to brutal outrages on the part of Pennsylvania troops which were almost a parallel to the Wyoming horror of 1778, or at least to the flight of the Connecticut settlers at that time.

In March, 1784, after a winter of unusual severity, the Wyoming Valley was devastated by floods which carried away many of the dwellings and covered the fertile fields with gravel. Famine was staring the settlers in the face, as their provisions had been carried away by the flood. The Pennsylvania Legislature was deaf to the petitions of Connecticut Yankees for relief; but under pretense of preventing contentions between them and the Pennsylvanians, sent an armed force in command of Justice Patterson to prevent alleged troubles which did not exist. Finding that no disorders calling for military interference existed, the brutal and vindictive Patterson proceeded to create disorders by allowing his soldiers to steal the scanty supplies of the settlers, insult the women, and drive the men at the point of the bayonet. He also barricaded the roads, and forbade the farmers to hunt, fish, or even draw water from their own wells. Construing their protests and resistance as disorderly, he drove one hundred and fifty families from their homes, and ordered them out of the country by forsaken and impassable routes. More than five hundred men, women and children were thus driven into the wilderness, and many of them died from exposure and fatigue.

The authorities at Philadelphia, on learning of Patterson's brutal measures, issued orders dismissing him and his men. These orders he defied, and

continued his hostile measures against settlers who had returned under the utterly inadequate protection of the sheriff of Northumberland and his posse. The substitute sent by the authorities of Pennsylvania to fill Patterson's place at a time when the settlers were besieging him was a match for Patterson in brutality.

This was General Armstrong, who arrived on the scene with four hundred militia. Pledging his faith as a soldier and his honor as a gentleman that, if the settlers would lay down their arms, Patterson's men should also be disarmed, he duped the settlers into surrender by his worthless pledge, and marched seventy-six of them to jail as prisoners. Fortunately that august and somnolent body peculiarly known to the government of Pennsylvania as the Council of Censors, which met once in seven years, was now in session, and with some difficulty settled the matter by compelling the Legislature to restore the Connecticut settlers to the full possession of their property in the valley.<sup>1</sup>

Governor Trumbull lived to learn the full particulars of these outrages, and there is no doubt that he was more deeply than ever impressed by them with the need of concerted action among the States, and the mischief of local jealousies.

<sup>1</sup> A full and interesting account of these troubles may be found in Professor McMaster's "History of the People of the U.S. from the Revolution to the Civil War", vol. 1, pp. 211-216.

## CHAPTER XXVI

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS — A CRITICAL PERIOD FOR AMERICA — ANTI-FEDERALISM IN CONNECTICUT — TRUMBULL'S FEDERALISM — THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI — TRUMBULL'S REPLY TO WASHINGTON'S ADDRESS — THE FAREWELL ADDRESS OF THE GOVERNOR, AND ITS RECEPTION BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**I**F the Atlantic cable could have been in operation in 1782 and 1783, it may well be imagined that political affairs in the United States might have assumed a different aspect. At the same time, it may also be imagined that the use which the incompetent Continental Congress might have made of this same cable would have done more than ever to hamper the actions of those wonderfully successful and able ambassadors, Jay, Franklin and Adams.

The year found England involved in the most intricate of political difficulties at home and political complications abroad. The short-lived ministry of Rockingham, followed by the equally short-lived but more efficient ministry of Shelburne, sufficed to establish terms of peace with the United States, which terms were finally ratified by the definite treaty of September 3, 1784. During this time, in the midst of changing ministries and political

turmoil, England had before her the added task of making peace with Holland, France and Spain.

The details of the peace negotiations with his own country were most carefully watched by the Governor of Connecticut. His satisfaction at the final cessation of hostilities on the eighth anniversary of the battle of Lexington may well be imagined. The victory for which he had hoped and toiled and prayed was now won; the stress and strain of war was over, and a new era which he had done much to inaugurate was now dawning upon his native land.

The long eighteen months following the surrender of Cornwallis had been months of uncertainty and anxiety, as we have seen; and that a still more critical period in the history of his country was to follow, Trumbull could see as plainly as any of the men of his time. That sharply defined lines were drawn in Connecticut between federalism and State rights at and before this time is evident, if only from the fact that in the May session of 1782 the General Assembly passed an act empowering Congress to collect duties on imports in the State, provided that no part of the money so collected should be applied to the half-pay of officers in the army.

It was upon this question of half-pay that the greatest difficulties and dangers of the time began. The Governor well knew that the measure had been urged by the great Washington five years before, as essential for keeping together the remnant of an army so nearly wiped out of existence by the terrible winter at Valley Forge. In 1780, the General

Assembly of Connecticut had instructed the delegates to Congress to oppose the measure; and their correspondence with the Governor shows that such opposition accorded with their personal views.<sup>1</sup> Though there is nothing on record at this time to show the views of the Governor on this question, there is no doubt that his subsequent outspoken views in favor of union and a strong central government were the result of careful deliberation, and opinions well grounded in experience. Such views placed him at variance with a large portion of the people; so that, at the annual election in May, 1783, he again lacked a majority of the popular vote. So strong, however, was the regard in which he was held by the General Assembly that this body elected him to the governorship.

This was to be the last term of his public services; and a stormy term it was, in its political aspects. Nowhere was the opposition to the granting of half-pay for life to retiring officers of the army stronger than in Connecticut; and the compromise or substitute of commutation, allowing full pay for five years, did not in any way help matters. The prejudice against officers of the army grew as the people found them accepting the grants of Congress, and they were looked upon as a favored class, forming the elements of an aristocracy in a democratic country. But little was needed to bring this feeling to a white heat; and that little soon appeared in the formation of the politically harmless and honorably fraternal

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Samuel Huntington to Governor Trumbull, October 26, 1780. In Massachusetts Historical Society Collection, 7th series, vol. 3, p. 153.



society, the Cincinnati. This society, as is well known, established a bond of brotherhood among the commissioned officers of the army, with no more harmful public influence than providing relief for the widows and orphans of such officers. But the malcontents, whose name was legion, scented danger in this perfectly harmless and honorable society, and the alarmists spread the tidings through the land that it was a secret organization which endangered the liberties of the country, and positively established an aristocracy with the purpose of taking the reins of government.

If anything could have had the effect of allaying the ferment, the masterly address of Washington to the governors of the various States would have done this. This address was presented to the General Assembly of Connecticut in June, 1783. It was met with resolutions expressing high regard for the great Commander in Chief, but carefully avoiding mention of the political sentiments which he expressed in his earnest, statesmanlike endeavor to bring about concerted action among the States, and loyalty to the needed form of general government. In transmitting this resolve to Washington, Governor Trumbull is not satisfied to make it merely an official communication, but is evidently so impressed with the situation that he is moved to add the following personal words:

“Permit me to address your Excellency on the pathetic manner you take leave of myself, and the State over which I have the honor to preside; to assure you how great pleasure and satisfaction we

have enjoyed, in the wisdom, magnanimity, and skill shown in forming, disciplining and conducting the army of the United States to so glorious an event; and also in the patriotic virtue displayed in this last address, which exhibits the foundation principles so necessary to be freely and fully inculcated, and appear to be the interest of all to agree in and pursue, — to maintain and support an indissoluble union of the States, under one federal head, a sacred regard to public justice, a proper peace establishment, and a pacific and friendly disposition among the people of the United States; to exhibit and maintain a good character for wisdom, honesty, firmness and benevolence. How pleasing the national prospect! How critical the present moments! Moderation, patience, and diligence are required to calm the public mind so variously agitated by prejudice, passion, and popular sinister designs. We have the consolation, *That the Lord reigns*. Tranquillity and happiness will be disturbed during the tumult. God grant that it may soon subside!

“In your retirement, my earnest prayer is that every temporal and heavenly blessing may attend you. I cannot persuade myself that the calls of the country will suffer so exalted a character and benevolent mind to withdraw from employment for the public good; although it is your wish.”

The tumult which the Governor deprecates in this letter was at its height at this time, and had been brought to its height by the formation of the Society of the Cincinnati, with the Governor's son

Jonathan as a charter member, soon to be followed by his brother John. The first name in the list of honorary members in this society in Connecticut is that of the Governor himself, who was elected to that honor on March 17, 1784. The fact that he did not bear a Continental commission disqualified him for regular membership, but under the rules of the order an honorary member was an active life member, lacking only the power to transmit his membership to his successors. In accepting this honorary membership, he showed his sympathy with the great Washington, the first President-General of the society, and accepted a well-deserved honor; as members of this class were only such as had distinguished themselves in the service of their country.

There can be no doubt that in accepting this honorary membership in the Society of the Cincinnati, Governor Trumbull placed himself in a position in which he stood opposed to a majority of the freemen of Connecticut. This, with his pronounced views in favor of federalism, caused him much concern and anxiety for the cause he had done so much to save, and made the last year of his long term of public service a year which brought but little enjoyment of the blessings of peace.

Governor Trumbull had now reached the age of seventy-three. Added to the political turmoil of the time was the fact that the treaty of peace brought him once more face to face with his indebtedness to British merchants; for this treaty validated all claims which British subjects might have against

people of the United States. In April, 1783, we find Governor Trumbull offering to Frazier, Champion and Hawley of London payment of their claim in money of the United States.<sup>1</sup> In view of the then depreciated condition of this currency, they preferred to retain the security which Trumbull had given them before the war. Even at his advanced age he appears to hope for some means of retrieving his fortune, and with this end in view he writes to his friends De Neufville and Sons and others regarding the prospects of future business.

But the long habit of active business and political life, the will to persevere in his activities could not prevent him from realizing that the infirmities of age had begun to take their hold upon him, and the weariness of a long strife had had its effect. Impressed at last with his physical disabilities, and longing for the rest and retirement which his friend the great Washington also craved, he presents to the General Assembly at its October session of 1783 the following farewell address:

“To the Honorable the Council and House of Representatives in General Court convened, Oct. 1783.

“Gentlemen:

“A few days will bring me to the anniversary of my birth; seventy-three years of my life will then have been completed; and next May fifty-one years will have passed since I was first honored with the

<sup>1</sup> This was doubtless in anticipation of the settlement of his accounts, as he had expressed the intention of using the money due him from the State to pay his foreign creditors.

confidence of the people in a public character. During this period, in different capacities, it has been my lot to be called to public service, almost without interruption. Fourteen years I have had the honor to fill the chief seat of government. With what carefulness, with what zeal and attention to your welfare, I have discharged the duties of my several stations, some few of you of equal age with myself, can witness for me from the beginning. During the latter period, none of you are ignorant of the manner in which my public life has been occupied. The watchful cares and solitudes of an eight years' distressing and unusual war, have also fallen to my share, and have employed many anxious moments of my latest time; which have been cheerfully devoted to the service of my country. Happy am I to find that all these cares, anxieties, and solitudes, are compensated by the noblest prospect which now opens to my fellow-citizens, of a happy establishment (if we are but wise to improve the precious opportunity) in peace, tranquillity, and national independence. With sincere and lively gratitude to Almighty God, our Great Protector and Deliverer, and with most hearty congratulations to all our citizens, I felicitate you, gentlemen, the other freemen, and all the good people of the State, in this glorious prospect.

“Impressed with these sentiments of gratitude and felicitation — reviewing the long course of years in which, through various events, I have had the pleasure to serve the State — contemplating, with pleasing wonder and satisfaction, at the close

of an arduous contest, the noble and enlarged scenes which now present themselves to my country's view — and reflecting at the same time on my advanced stage of life — a life worn out almost in the constant cares of office — I think it my duty to retire from the busy concerns of public affairs; that at the evening of my days, I may sweeten their decline, by devoting myself with less avocation, and more attention, to the duties of religion, the service of my God, and preparation for a future happier state of existence; in which pleasing employment, I shall not cease to remember my country, and to make it my ardent prayer that heaven will not fail to bless her with its choicest favors.

“At this auspicious moment, therefore, of my country's happiness — when she has just reached the goal of her wishes, and obtained the object for which she has so long contended and so nobly struggled, I have to request the favor from you, gentlemen, and through you from all the freemen of the State, that, after May next, I may be excused from any further service in public life, and that, from this time, I may no longer be considered as an object of your suffrages for any public employment in the State. The reasonableness of my request will, I am persuaded, be questioned by no one. The length of time I have devoted to their service, with my declining state of vigor and activity, will, I please myself, form for me a sufficient and un-failing excuse with my fellow-citizens.

“At this parting address, you will suffer me, gentlemen, to thank you, and all the worthy members

of preceding assemblies, with whom I have had the honor to act, for all that assistance, counsel, aid, and support, which I have ever experienced during my administration of government; and in the warmth of gratitude to assure you, that, till my latest moments, all your kindness to me shall be remembered; — and that my constant prayer shall be employed with Heaven, to invoke the Divine Guidance and protection in your future councils and government.

“Age and experience dictate to me — and the zeal with which I have been known to serve the public through a long course of years, will, I trust, recommend to the attention of the people, some few thoughts which I shall offer to their consideration on this occasion, as my last advisory legacy.

“I would in the first place entreat my countrymen, as they value their own internal welfare, and the good of posterity, that they maintain inviolate, by a strict adherence to its original principles, the happy constitution under which we have so long subsisted as a corporation; that for the purposes of national happiness and glory, they will support and strengthen the federal union by every constitutional means in their power. The existence of a Congress, vested with powers competent to the great national purposes for which that body was instituted, is essential to our national security, establishment, and independence. Whether Congress is already vested with such powers, is a question, worthy, in my opinion, of most serious, candid, and dispassionate consideration of this leg-

islature, and those of all the other confederated States. For my own part, I do not hesitate to pronounce that, in my opinion, that body is not possessed of those powers which are absolutely necessary to the best management and direction of the general weal, or the fulfilment of our own expectations. This defect in our federal constitution I have already lamented as the cause of many inconveniences which we have experienced; and unless wisely remedied will, I foresee, be productive of evils, disastrous, if not fatal, to our future union and confederation. In my idea, a Congress invested with full and sufficient authorities, is absolutely necessary for the great purposes of our confederate union, as our legislature is for the support of our internal order, regulation, and government in the State. Both bodies should be intrusted with powers fully sufficient to answer the designs of their several institutions. These powers should be distinct, they should be clearly defined, ascertained, and understood. They should be carefully adhered to, they should be watched over with a wakeful and distinguished attention of the people. But this watchfulness is far different from that excess of jealousy, which, from a mistaken fear of abuse, withholds the necessary powers, and denies the means which are essential to the end expected. Just as ridiculous is this latter disposition, as would be the practice of a farmer, who should deprive the laboring man of the tools necessary for his business, lest he should hurt himself or injure his employer, and yet expects his work to be accomplished. This kind of ex-



cessive jealousy is, in my view, too prevalent at this day; and will, I fear, if not abated, prove a principal means of preventing the enjoyment of our national independence and glory, in that extent and perfection which the aspect of our affairs (were we to be so wise,) so pleasingly promises to us. My Countrymen! suffer me to ask, who are the objects of this jealousy? Who, my fellow citizens, are the men we have to fear? Not strangers who have no connection with our welfare! — no, they are men of your own choice, from among ourselves; — a choice (if we are faithful to ourselves,) dictated by the most perfect freedom of election; and that election repeated as often as you could wish, or is consistent with the good of the people. They are our brethren — acting for themselves as well as for us — and sharers with us in all the general burthens and benefits. They are men, who from interest, affection, and every social tie, have the same attachment to our constitution and government as ourselves. Why therefore should we fear them with this unreasonable jealousy? In our present temper of mind, are we not rather to fear ourselves? — to fear the propriety of our own elections? — or rather to fear, that from this excess of jealousy and mistrust, each are cautious of his neighbor's love of power, and fearing lest if he be trusted, he would misuse it, we should lose all confidence and government, and everything lend to anarchy and confusion? from whose horrid womb, should we plunge into it, will spring a government that may justly make us all to tremble.

“I would also beg, that, for the support of the national faith and honor, as well as domestic tranquillity, they would pay the strictest attention to all the sacred rules of justice and equity, by a faithful observance and fulfillment of all public as well as private engagements. Public expenses are unavoidable:—and those of the late war, although they fall far short of what might have been expected, when compared with the magnitude of the object for which we contended, the length of the contest, with our unprepared situation and peculiarity of circumstances, yet could not fail to be great;—but great as they may appear to be, when, for the defence of our invaluable rights and liberties, the support of our government, and our national existence, they have been incurred and allowed by those to whom, by your own choice, you have delegated the power, and assigned the duty, of watching over the common weal, and guarding your interests, their public engagements are as binding on the people, as your own private contracts; and are to be discharged with the same good faith and punctuality.

“I most earnestly request my fellow citizens, that they revere and practice virtue in all its lovely forms—this being the surest and best establishment of national, as well as private felicity and prosperity—That, dismissing as well all local and confined prejudices, as unreasonable and excessive jealousies and suspicions, they study peace and harmony with each other, and with the several parts of the confederated Republic—That they

pay an orderly and respectful regard to the laws and regulations of government; and that, making a judicious use of that freedom and frequency of election, which is the great security and palladium of their rights, they will place confidence in the public officers, and submit their public concerns, with cheerfulness and readiness, to the decisions and determinations of Congress and their own legislatures; whose collected and united wisdom the people will find to be a much more sure dependence than the uncertain voice of popular clamor, which most frequently, is excited and blown about by the artful and designing part of the community, to effect particular and oftentimes sinister purposes. At such times, the steady good sense of the virtuous public, wisely exercised in a judicious choice of their representatives, and a punctual observance of their collected counsels, is the surest guide to national interest, happiness, and security.

“Finally, my fellow-citizens, I exhort you to love one another: let each one study the good of his neighbor and of the community, as his own:—hate strifes, contentions, jealousies, envy, avarice, and every evil work, and ground yourselves in this faithful and sure axiom, that virtue exalteth a nation, but that sin and evil workings are the destruction of a people.

“I commend you, gentlemen, and the good people of the State, with earnestness and ardor, to the blessing, the protection, the counsel and direction of the great Counsellor and Director, whose wisdom and power is sufficient to establish you as a great

and happy people; and wishing you the favour of this divine benediction, in my public character — I bid you a long — a happy adieu.

“I am, gentlemen,

“Your most obedient, humble servant

“Jon<sup>th</sup> Trumbull.”

Like the address of Washington to the governors of the thirteen States, this farewell address of Governor Trumbull was respectfully received. To say that it had the effect of pouring oil upon the troubled waters of Connecticut politics, however, would be to say too much. We may imagine that it provoked much discussion, and that probably words regarding the political situation, even though they were the words of the great Washington, could not carry more weight with the people of Connecticut than this same address just quoted in full. To such men as Roger Sherman, Oliver Ellsworth, William Samuel Johnson, Matthew Griswold, the Huntingtons and many others among the prominent men of the State the arguments and political statements of the address were clear. Such men were already convinced that Washington and Trumbull were right in their views. But a majority of the rank and file, with some prominent leaders, clung to the narrower view of the situation which had been inbred among them through generation after generation of Connecticut conservatism and autonomy. Congress had already been driven from Philadelphia by a mutinous mob of unpaid soldiers; the incendiary address to the army at Newburgh had been, by Washington's unflinching tact, turned

against the intriguers who circulated it; but such events carried no lessons with them for the anti-federalist party. Sober second thought after the fruitless Middletown convention of the following December was needed; the failure of credit abroad, and the demonstrations of the inability of Congress to adopt any legislation which could be of any effect, — all these bitter experiences were needed, together with the gradually growing federalism among former anti-federalists in other States, to bring the people into full accord with the political sentiments so freely expressed in the Governor's address.

In the General Assembly something of an official kind had to be done regarding this address. Here was a Governor who had safely carried his State through this terrible struggle of eight years, whose personal character commanded their respect, whose advanced age and long, arduous service certainly called for recognition. His address is before the House, but contains certain political doctrines which are not even recognized by the majority as wholesome, if bitter medicine, and which are by some regarded as poison. The situation is delicate, and for that reason the address is referred to that last resort of procrastination, — a committee. In due time the committee reports, recommending certain guarded resolutions, which may possibly be construed as the adoption of the Governor's political views by the General Assembly. To this the Lower House objects, and votes to refer the report and resolutions to the next General Assembly, to con-

vene six months later. To this the Senate dissents. A committee of conference of the two Houses finally agrees upon amended resolutions, shorn of all political character, which resolutions were readily passed by both houses, and read as follows:

“Whereas his Excellency *Jonathan Trumbull* Esquire, Governor and Commander-in-chief in and over the State of Connecticut, has signified in an address to the General Assembly, to be communicated to their constituents, his desire that he might not, considering his advanced Age, be considered by the freemen of this State as an object of their choice at the next general election; as the Governor has declared his wish to retire, after the expiration of his present appointment, from the cares and business of government:

“*Resolved by this Assembly*, That they consider it as their duty in behalf of their constituents, to express in terms of the most sincere gratitude, the highest respect for his Excellency Governor *Trumbull*, for the great and eminent services he has rendered this State during his long and prosperous administration; more especially for that display of wisdom, justice, fortitude and magnanimity, joined with the most unremitting attention and perseverance, which he has manifested during the late successful though distressing war; which must place the chief magistrate of this State in the rank of those great and worthy patriots, who have eminently distinguished themselves as the defenders of the rights of mankind.

“And that this Assembly consider it a most

gracious dispensation of Divine Providence, that a life of so much usefulness has been prolonged to such an advanced age, with unimpaired vigor and activity of mind.

“But if the freemen of this State shall think proper to comply with his Excellency’s request, it will be the wish of this Assembly, that his successor in office may possess those eminent public and private virtues, which gave so much lustre to the character of him who has in the most honorable manner so long presided over this State.

“It is further *Resolved* — That the Secretary present to Governor *Trumbull* an authentic copy of this act, as a testimony of the respect and esteem of the Legislature of this State. And the Secretary is further directed, that, as soon as he shall be furnished with such copy, he cause the same to be printed, together with this act.”

Thus the General Assembly testified to an appreciation of the Governor’s past services, though the majority were unwilling to endorse his political views. Not so, however, was Washington. A copy of the Governor’s farewell address was sent him by the Governor’s son Jonathan, and met with the following comment from the Father of his Country:

“I sincerely thank you for the copy of the Address of Governor Trumbull to the General Assembly and freemen of your State. The sentiments contained in it are such as would do honor to a patriot of any age or nation; at least they are too coincident with my own, not to meet with my warmest approbation. Be so good as to present my cordial respects

to the Governor, and let him know that it is my wish, that the mutual friendship and esteem, which have been planted and fostered in the tumult of public life, may not wither and die in the serenity of retirement. Tell him that we should rather amuse the evening hours of our life in cultivating the tender plants, and bringing them to perfection, before they are transplanted to a happier clime."

But six months now remained before the retirement of the Governor from public life. During this time the political turmoil began to subside. The Middletown convention held one or two sessions and adopted resolutions which failed to fulminate throughout the State, and inflammatory addresses to the freemen which failed to inflame. How much of this subsidence of the political turmoil was due to the Governor's unflinching stand on political matters, it is of course impossible to say; but we may safely accord to his influence a good share of the brighter political prospect which was then beginning to dawn.



## CHAPTER XXVII

GOVERNOR GRISWOLD ELECTED — TRUMBULL IN  
PRIVATE LIFE — SETTLEMENT FOR EIGHT YEARS'  
SERVICES — HIS OWN RETROSPECT — HIS PURSUITS  
IN PRIVATE LIFE — HONORS BESTOWED UPON HIM —  
“BROTHER JONATHAN”

THE May election of 1784 resulted in the choice of Matthew Griswold for Governor. He was not elected by vote of the freemen,<sup>1</sup> owing, no doubt, to the fact that he had so openly espoused the political views of Governor Trumbull. The views of the General Assembly, however, had so materially changed since the farewell address of the Governor six months before that Griswold was readily elected by that body. It is said that Governor Trumbull had been strongly urged to continue as a candidate for the position he had so long held; but however this may be, he remained firm in his determination to retire from public life.

On the twenty-first of May he retired to his home in Lebanon. He had listened to the customary election sermon, delivered on this impressive occasion by the Reverend Doctor Joseph Huntington of Coventry. He had received from the General

<sup>1</sup> The popular vote was declared, Griswold 2192, Pitkin 1698, Huntington 1177, Oliver Wolcott, 1053, scattering 742. Diary of Ezra Stiles, vol. 3, p. 120.

Assembly a brief but appropriate parting tribute, his reply to which his biographer, Stuart, is good enough to supply from his own vivid imagination;<sup>1</sup> and as a crowning gratification had seen on the twentieth of May an act passed by the General Assembly, by a large majority, unconditionally favoring the collection by Congress of duties or "imposts" on imported goods. This measure was a tacit consent to the half-pay and commutation acts of that body, and thus showed that the retiring Governor had only been a little in advance of his day in advocating such legislation,<sup>2</sup> or, at least, the keeping the contract which such legislation involved.

The retiring Governor had now an opportunity to look into his own affairs and condition. For eight years he had given up all attempts to engage in business, having previously resigned the various positions as judge and magistrate which he held when first elected to the governorship, and having devoted himself exclusively to the arduous duties of that office. We have seen, from intimations in his farewell address, that he felt conscious that the infirmities of age were beginning to affect him, and that but a very few years at most would bring his earthly pilgrimage to its end. It was a time, at last, to set his house in order. Added to his consciousness of the infirmities of age was the consciousness that his financial affairs were at their lowest ebb. His salary as Governor had been regularly voted by the General Assembly, but we learn

<sup>1</sup> Life of Trumbull, p. 650.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, p. 299.

from a letter which he wrote on April 29, 1785, to his son John that he had "received but two half years' salaries since the beginning of our contest with Great Britain."

In presenting his accounts to the General Assembly he says that rather than to have called upon the State even for his pittance of £300 per year during the exigencies of war he would have lost the amount "forever." It is difficult to discover just what his means of subsistence were during those trying times; but as the Governor's share in naval prize money was quite liberal, though not so much as at previous times, we must imagine that from this source added to the meager product of the farm, he eked out his humble, unostentatious livelihood.

His claim upon the State for his salary, disbursements and extra services in the Susquehanna case and other matters was readily allowed, amounting to three thousand and sixteen pounds, eleven shillings and fourpence, and was liquidated by three notes bearing interest and redeemable respectively in five, six and seven years. Thus was a bankrupt Governor paid by a bankrupt State in the times when both had exhausted their resources in a righteous and at last successful cause.

With this settlement of his accounts with his State, Governor Trumbull's public record ends. It was a year after his retirement from office that the allowance of his accounts was passed by vote of the General Assembly; so that, at the time, he was nearing the completion of the seventy-fifth

year of his life. More than a year before this time he had written to his friend Washington, doubtless in recognition of the message already quoted which the latter had sent him through his son Jonathan:

“I felcitate you, Sir, with great cordiality, on your having already reached the goal of your wishes, and most devoutly invoke the Divine benediction on your enjoyments and pursuits. A month more, I trust, will bring me to the haven of retirement; in the tranquillity of which I hope to have leisure to attend to and cultivate those seeds of private friendship, which have been planted during the tumults of war, and in the cultivation of which I promise myself to reap much pleasure.

“Indulging in these prospects, I am induced to wish, and even to hope, that the correspondence between you and me, which commenced under the pressure of disagreeable circumstances, may not wholly cease when we find ourselves in a happier situation. Although enveloped in the shades of retirement, the busy mind cannot suppress its activity, but will be seeking some employment, which will indeed be necessary to dispel the langour which a scene of inactivity would be apt to produce. Subjects will not be wanting; far different, and more agreeable, I trust, than those we have been accustomed to dwell upon; and occasions may present which will serve to beguile a lingering hour, and afford some pleasing amusement, or instructive information. Let not the disparity of age, or the idea of a correspondent seventy-three years advanced on his journey through life, chill your

expectations from this proposal. I promise you my best endeavors, and when you perceive, as too soon, alas! you may, that your returns are not proportional to your disbursements, you have only to cease your correspondence; I shall submit."

To this Washington replies under date of May fifteenth:

"It was with great pleasure and thankfulness I received a recognisance of your friendship, in your letter of the 20th of last month.

"It is indeed a pleasure, from the walks of private life to view in retrospect all the meanderings of our past labors, the difficulties through which we have waded, and the happy haven to which the ship has been brought. Is it possible, after this, that it should founder? Will not the All-wise and All-powerful Director of human events preserve it? I think he will. He may, however, (for some wise purpose of his own,) suffer our indiscretions and folly to place our national character low in the political scale, and this, unless more wisdom and less prejudice take the lead in our government, will most certainly happen.

"Believe me, my dear Sir, there is no disparity in our ways of thinking and acting, though there may happen to be a little in the years we have lived, which places the advantage of the correspondence on my side, as I shall profit by your experience and observations; and that no correspondence can be more pleasing to me than that which originates from similar sentiments and similar conduct through (though not a long war, the im-

portance of it and attainments considered,) a painful contest. I pray you, therefore, to continue me among the number of your friends, and to favor me with such observations and sentiments as may occur."

How far this intention of exchanging friendly letters was carried out, it is impossible to say. From the published letters of Washington we learn that he unexpectedly found himself flooded with correspondence and with callers at about this time to such an extent that it seriously affected his personal affairs, and even threatened his health. Governor Trumbull, too, was occupied very fully with his own personal affairs for more than a year after the correspondence just quoted. It seems doubtful, therefore, if there was much opportunity for such active personal correspondence as these two patriots had promised themselves. If any letters were exchanged, they were not of an official character, and for that reason would not have been as carefully preserved as the mass of official letters during the war. However this may be, the letter of Governor Trumbull and the reply of Washington just quoted give as good indication of the regard in which they held one another as any number of personal letters could give.

The settlement with the State having been effected, as we have seen, the ex-Governor had, of course, more time to devote to his private affairs and to his favorite pursuits. He had time, too, which had not till then been granted him, to take an old man's retrospect of the scenes through which he had

passed, and of the busy, useful life which was now fast drawing to a close. From his memorial to the General Assembly in presenting his accounts, we find that he alludes to his personal experiences and sacrifices for the first time; "to the busy and distressing scenes which followed for a succession of about eight years, the burden of which, in this State, in a peculiar manner fell and centered on him — a period during which, at home or abroad, he had scarcely time to eat his necessary food — and many sleepless nights — to the singularly obnoxious light in which he stood with the enemy — to the price that was set upon his head — and add to these the large expenses of attending, besides the stated, fourteen special assemblies — and other expenses abroad. But it is impossible, without the experience, for anyone to realize or form an adequate idea of the multiplicity, weight and burden which lay upon him during that trying scene." <sup>1</sup>

This statement, it should be remembered, is in support of — almost in apology for — claims for extra services, which it was customary for the General Assembly to allow the Governor, as shown by precedents which he cites, in which more liberal allowance had been made than he claims in this instance.

The statement that a price had been set on his head comes in the form of documentary evidence for the first time in this memorial. We know him

<sup>1</sup> This extract is from a manuscript copy of the memorial which is not in Governor Trumbull's handwriting, and may possibly differ in phraseology from the original.

well enough to know that he would not make such a statement except upon good authority. Tradition tells of a visit made by a stranger, whose appearance was suspicious, at the Governor's house at Lebanon at a time when he was ill and in bed. This stranger so persistently demanded an interview with the Governor that his housekeeper, Mrs. Hyde, at last armed herself with shovel and tongs, and drove the intruder from the house, doubtless giving, at the same time, an alarm to the neighborhood which made Lebanon too hot to hold him. In the early days of the war, too, Governor Trumbull was known in England as the "rebel governor", all the other governors being loyalists. It is quite probable, too, that the article in the *Political Magazine* of London, which has been attributed to the Reverend Samuel Peters, was written in full knowledge that it might serve the turn of some enterprising enemy who aspired to reap the reward which was set on the Governor's head. For that reason the personal description which it gives is more reliable than the majority of the statements of Peters.

It seems that the Governor's expectations of a retired life were but partially fulfilled during the year 1784, for on February 15, 1785, we find him writing to Lane, Son and Fraser of London:

"It is my intention to put over my affairs of business in a Trading way into the Hands of my two sons as soon as I can, and live, myself, in a manner freer from Encumbrances than I do at present — 'tis in your power to direct and help



me forward, or to put me and my sons under great Disadvantages."

There is no doubt, however, that he was able to some extent to carry out the intentions expressed in his farewell address; for we learn from his pastor, the Reverend Zebulon Ely, that "This recess from public employment a little before his decease, afforded him a golden opportunity for his beloved sacred duty. This he diligently and delightfully improved."<sup>1</sup> This was probably his principal and favorite study; for from the same source we learn that even in the busy days of the war he devoted every moment he could spare to the study of the Scriptures in the original Hebrew, in which language he was "expert."

His correspondence with Doctor Ezra Stiles, President of Yale College, shows that at this time Trumbull had returned to the pursuit of his chosen profession of more than fifty years before, employing much of his time in writing sermons which he submitted to Doctor Stiles. This he did, no doubt, with a view to assist his own studies in theology.

Although this was his principal study, his fondness for some secular studies, and the natural activity of a mind which could not brook an idle moment, led him, no doubt, to some reading in history, jurisprudence and other literature.

In recognition of his scholastic acquirements and statesmanship, he received from Yale College in 1779<sup>2</sup> the honorary degree of LL.D., and the same

<sup>1</sup> Funeral sermon, August 19, 1785.

<sup>2</sup> October 27, 1779. Diary of Ezra Stiles, vol. 2, p. 332.

degree also from the University of Edinburgh in 1785. In 1782, he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. These honors all came to him unsought, so much so that, in the case of the American Academy it became necessary for his friend Doctor Stiles to remind him to acknowledge the honor and accept the election nearly a year after its date.

Of all the honors which attach to his name none is so cherished by Connecticut men especially as the title "Brother Jonathan", which tradition tells us that Washington bestowed upon him in the days of the Revolution, and which, it is generally believed, came to be adopted, for this reason, as the household name of the American nation. Until recently, this version of the origin of our national sobriquet has never been questioned so far as can be learned; but in 1902 an elaborate pamphlet of thirty-four pages was published by Mr. Albert Matthews of Boston,<sup>1</sup> discrediting the title as acquired by Governor Trumbull in this way, and thus, of course, discarding him as the source of our national nickname.

It hardly serves our purpose to go into the elaborate treatment which Mr. Matthews has given to this subject, investigating, as he has, the use of the forename Jonathan from the seventeenth century down, as a term of derision or mild pleasantry. Like most attempts to break down traditions, Mr. Matthews' paper gives no positive proof that the

<sup>1</sup> "Brother Jonathan, by Albert Matthews; reprinted from the publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts. Cambridge, 1902."

tradition is groundless; and, by implication, at least, calls for positive proof that it is founded on fact. It is safe to say that positive proof, either in denial or affirmation of the tradition, is out of the question. The earliest affirmation to be found in print is in 1846, and the only denial is that of Mr. Matthews, fifty-six years later.

The affirmation of the tradition appears in the Norwich [Conn.] *Evening Courier* of November 12, 1846, and reads thus:

“The following account of the Origin of the term ‘*Brother Jonathan*,’ as applied to the United States, will, no doubt, gratify the curiosity of a multitude of minds, no less than it has done our own. It is the first and only account we have ever seen of the origin of a term which has come into universal use.<sup>1</sup> It comes to us through a friend in this city, from one of the most intelligent gentlemen and sterling Whigs of Connecticut — a gentleman now upwards of 80 years of age — himself an active participator in the scenes of the Revolution. — *Ed. Courier.*”

“‘BROTHER JONATHAN’—ORIGIN OF THE TERM AS APPLIED TO THE UNITED STATES.

“When General Washington, after being appointed Commander of the Army of the Revolutionary war, came to Massachusetts to organize it, and make preparation for the defense of the Country, he found great destitution of ammunition

<sup>1</sup> A letter once in possession of the late Charles C. Johnson of Norwich, in reply to an inquiry made by his father to an old citizen in the vicinity, states that this old citizen had talked with men of Revolutionary times, who told him positively that the title was in general use and originated with Washington.

and other means, necessary to meet the powerful foe he had to contend with, and great difficulty to obtain them. If attacked in such condition, the cause at once might be hopeless. On one occasion at that anxious period, a consultation of the officers and others was had, when it seemed no way could be devised to make such preparation as was necessary. His Excellency Jonathan Trumbull the elder, was then Governor of the State of Connecticut, on whose judgment and aid the General placed the greatest reliance, and remarked, We must consult 'Brother Jonathan' on the subject. The General did so, and the Governor was successful in supplying many of the wants of the Army. When difficulties after arose, and the army was spread over the Country, it became a by-word, 'we must consult Brother Jonathan.' The term Yankee is still applied to a portion, but, 'Brother Jonathan' has now become a designation of the whole country, as John Bull has, for England."

This story Mr. Matthews characterizes as "a newspaper story pure and simple; a story unsupported by one iota of corroborating evidence." With him it is a question of etymology with which historians and biographers have to deal. If we could imagine Governor Trumbull on trial for his life, on the charge of the capital crime of having been called Brother Jonathan by General Washington, it must be admitted that no court could convict him on the evidence as reported in the *Norwich Evening Courier*. But the case of establishing a tradition is hardly similar; and it must be said that

Mr. Matthews was hardly in a receptive mood for "corroborating evidence" at the time of writing his paper. His aim is to propound a theory in an impartial spirit, of course, as all theories are believed by their authors to be propounded. He looks for some allusion to the designation in the Reverend Zebulon Ely's "Sermon preached at the Funeral Solemnity of His Excellency Jonathan Trumbull Esq. LL.D.," and utterly ignores the mention in that sermon relating to Washington's supposed reception of the news of the death of "his brother and companion in the late struggles", perhaps for the reason that a funeral sermon does not use the precise term Brother Jonathan for the benefit of future etymologists. It is certainly hardly dignified enough for use in a funeral sermon, or in the punctilious official correspondence of such a man as Washington. But why should this term brother be ignored when used by a contemporary as a fitting term by which to designate the relations between Washington and Trumbull?

Again, when the term in full is found in use at an early period in the Revolution, this very fact is used to discredit its application. This occurs in the "Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D.," edited by Doctor Franklin B. Dexter. On March 21, 1776, Doctor Stiles, then at Dighton, recording the evacuation of Boston by the British, writes:

"They left Bunker Hill Sdsday Morning 17th at Eight o'Clock, leaving Images of Hay dressed like Sentries standing, with a Label on the Breast of one, inscribed 'Welcome, Brother Jonathan.'"

It is admitted by Mr. Matthews that the discovery of this extract modifies certain statements previously made, but "does not appear to affect the conclusions in this paper." Beyond this, it only seems necessary to him to quote Doctor Dexter's editorial footnote, which reads thus:

"The use of this phrase by the British at this date seems to prove that the common explanation of its origin (with reference to Washington's consultations with Governor Jonathan Trumbull) cannot be the correct one."

It should be remembered that Doctor Stiles records this statement apparently from hearsay; and if his information was not correct, or if his memory was at fault, he was at the time so familiar with the term "Brother Jonathan" that he had no hesitation in adopting it. Assuming, however, that the information he records, at a distance of thirty-six miles from the scene, was correct, why should Doctor Dexter, seconded by Mr. Matthews, assert that the date of the use of this term by the British, "seems to prove that the common explanation of its origin cannot be the correct one?" In the first place, how do we know that the British placed the figures at Bunker Hill; and if they did, how do we know that they placed the inscription "Welcome, Brother Jonathan" on one of them? As a specimen of British humor this proceeding of the badly outgeneraled British in this instance is not particularly striking. The inscription would be more appropriate as a specimen of exultant Yankee irony. But even admitting that the British themselves were

the authors of this stupendous joke, why does that fact discredit our Connecticut tradition? Going back to our much derided newspaper item of 1846, we find it stated that it was precisely at this time, when Washington had found Trumbull's assistance so valuable, that he applied to him this much discussed sobriquet. The two men had been in active correspondence for nine months at the time when Doctor Stiles records the incident; and it was a gratifying fact to the Americans, and doubtless a notorious fact to the British, that men and munitions of war had been pouring in from Connecticut under direction of her rebel Governor — the only colonial Governor who had dared to be a rebel. Even before Washington assumed command, he well knew that Ticonderoga had been captured by an expedition planned in Connecticut; and that of the sixty-three half-barrels of powder which the Americans used at Bunker Hill, thirty-six half-barrels had been sent from the provident little State with a rebel Governor. The time of the evacuation of Boston was none too early for Washington to feel assured that he had in Connecticut a Brother Jonathan on whom he could rely in time of need.

The intimate and confidential nature of the relations between Washington and Trumbull are not discussed by Mr. Matthews, probably because they form only presumptive evidence of the possibility that Washington might have used the term brother in its full significance in speaking of Trumbull. Certain it is that in a letter of condolence Washington signs himself, “Yours, with esteem and affec-

tion." But references to such relations partake of the "unscientific" method which Mr. Matthews deplores, and the temptation to discuss his view of the case has led us already further than we had intended to go. If we are to insist upon direct evidence of every event in history, throwing aside tradition as worthless, many incidents of Connecticut history must certainly be discredited; as, for example, the Charter Oak episode, the, silencing of Governor Benjamin Fletcher by beating the drums; or the secret debate on the Stamp Act; for these incidents rest solely on tradition. And if we extend our researches to history in general, we should probably find it alarming to know how small a portion of its statements can be proved by direct evidence, such as seems to be called for to prove the authenticity of our Brother Jonathan tradition.

From a merely cold, logical view, it is unimportant to assert this tradition. Governor Trumbull's record stands unchanged whether Washington did or did not call him Brother Jonathan. And yet, from a sentimental, unscientific point of view, the title bears with it an honor which is worth far more to such an American as Trumbull than any order of knighthood ever bestowed by royal accolade. Let us be sentimental, then. The Declaration of Independence is a very sentimental document, and patriotism itself is a sentiment, pure and simple, and "unscientific."



## CHAPTER XXVIII

CONTINUED GOOD HEALTH — SUDDEN ILLNESS —  
DEATH — HIS PASTOR'S ESTIMATE OF HIS PERSONAL  
CHARACTER — WASHINGTON'S TRIBUTE — THE TRUM-  
BULL TOMB AND EPITAPH

THERE is but little left to add to the story of this long, busy, useful life. In his retirement it must be believed that this good old man found much comfort. He had and improved, first of all, the opportunity which he craved for calm and delightful religious meditation and study. Notwithstanding the tremendous strain of the eight years of war, his mental faculties continued unimpaired, and his bodily health remarkably good for a man of his years and burdens. If he allowed public affairs to occupy his mind to any great extent, as he could hardly fail to do, it must have been with grave concern that he regarded the still uncertain condition of the national government. We have seen his eagerness for the adoption of the articles of confederation during the war; and we have seen his strong and unqualified plea for a suitable federation of the victorious States. Thus we may well imagine that he longed to see the victory made effective by the adoption of a federal constitution such as he advocated.

But this was not to be: he did not live to see the

victory of our arms, which he had done so much to promote, crowned by the establishing of a stable form of republican government. He had only an abiding faith, as had Washington, that this would come in due time, and this was his consolation for the deferred hope of the adoption of a federal constitution.

Early in August, 1785, he was prostrated by a fever which soon assumed what was then called a malignant form. For twelve days the toil-worn body resisted the fatal stroke of the disease. At last complications developed, and on the seventeenth of August he reached the peaceful end of his life.

It is recorded in the family Bible by his son Jonathan that his death was "easy, quiet and calm", and that he was "in possession of Reason to the last, as far as could be discovered."

It was a fitting end to such a life: no gradual loss of the faculties, no apparent decline even of the physical powers. The active mind remained apparently active to the last, and the worn body was spared the long wasting process which so often renders the last years of life a burden to the aged sufferer. He felt and knew that his life work was done; and for more than a year he had been calmly waiting and preparing for the end.

At his funeral, on the nineteenth of August, his pastor, the Reverend Zebulon Ely, preached an impressive sermon, from the text,

"So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord" (Deut. 34:5).

The long eulogy, after the manner of the time, has the ring of sincerity, and furnishes the fullest description of his personal character which can be found in print. After an eloquent eulogy on his public character and record, Pastor Ely says:

“As a man, he wonderfully possessed the amiable grace of condescending with dignity; the characteristic of true greatness. He knew how to adapt himself to persons of the greatest diversity of circumstances and conditions of life, having learned to please all with whom he conversed to their edification. There was nothing of that magisterial loftiness and ostentatious parade, too often attendant on men of rank and elevated stations of life. We may with good reason conclude he became so eminent and amiable in this respect, by daily contemplating the perfect deportment of his Divine Master; who hath, with singular propriety, directed us to learn of him being *meek and lowly*.

“His temper was uncommonly mild, serene, and cheerful; his words weighty and instructive; his speech rather low, and his whole carriage graceful and worthy. His constant seasonable attendance on Divine worship, and his unaffected devotion in the House of God, were most beautiful.

“As a parent, he was affectionate, venerable, and endearing, by precept and example carefully forming the minds and manners of his offspring. As a neighbor he was kind and obliging.

“As a student, he was exceedingly careful of precious time, diligent and indefatigable in his researches after truth, 'till the close of his life. His

acquaintance with history was very extensive, and his accuracy in chronology unparallel'd.

“But his chief glory (as must be that of every man) ariseth from his truly religious and pious character. What would it avail that we view him as filling the most dignified office in the republic, receiving the applause of his country, and that we hear his fame echoed from European shores, could not we also view him as *the servant of the LORD*, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of GOD. What would it avail us that we view him as one accomplished in human erudition, famous as a linguist, a theologian, a politician, an historian and chronologist; could we not also contemplate him, as one who *gloried in the cross of CHRIST, depending alone on his merits for salvation, acknowledging all that to which he had attained to be wholly of grace, and accounting them excellent above what eye hath seen, ear heard, or the heart of man conceived!*”

We may well imagine that the loss of such a man in the little community of Lebanon was most deeply felt. Many are said to have borne testimony to his kindly, neighborly ministrations in time of need; and all, of high or low degree, must have felt for him an esteem mingled with real affection.

It is, of course, natural to turn from the genial, kindly record of his private life to the more important and imposing record of his public life. No more fitting testimonial to his public and private life can be found than in the words of Washington in reply to a letter from Trumbull's son Jonathan

in which he had announced the death of his father:

“Mount Vernon, Oct. 1st, 1785.

“My Dear Sir: It so happened that your letter of the first of last month did not reach me until Saturday's post.

“You know too well the sincere respect and regard I entertained for your venerable father's public and private character, to require assurance of the concern I felt for his death; or of that sympathy in your feelings, for the loss of him, which is prompted by friendship. Under this loss, however, great as your feelings must have been at the first shock, you have everything to console you.

“A long and well-spent life in the service of his country places Governor Trumbull among the first of patriots. In the social duties he yielded to no one; and his lamp, from the common course of nature, being nearly extinguished, worn down with age and cares, yet retaining his mental faculties in perfection, are blessings which rarely attend advanced life. All these combined, have secured to his memory unusual respect and love here, and, no doubt, unmeasurable happiness hereafter.

“I am sensible that none of these observations can have escaped you, that I can offer nothing which your own reason has not already suggested upon the occasion; and being of Sterne's opinion, that ‘before an affliction is digested, consolation comes too soon, and after it is digested it comes too late, there is but a mark between these two, almost as fine as a hair, for a comforter to take aim

at,' I rarely attempt it, nor should I add more on this subject to you, as it will be a renewal of sorrow, by calling afresh to your remembrance things that had better be forgotten.

"My principal pursuits are of a rural nature, in which I have great delight, especially as I am blessed with the enjoyment of good health. Mrs. Washington, on the contrary, is hardly ever well; but thankful for your kind remembrance of her, joins me in every good wish for you, Mrs. Trumbull, and your family.

"Be assured that with sentiments of the purest esteem,

"I am, Dear Sir,  
"Your affectionate friend  
"and obedient servant  
"G<sup>o</sup> Washington."

The pilgrim to our historic towns, when visiting the town of Lebanon, will find among its beautiful hills and valleys an old burial ground located by the side of the main thoroughfare. Prominent in this burial ground is the Trumbull family tomb, where the hero and patriot whose life-story has been attempted in these pages was laid to rest a century and a quarter ago. The tomb is surmounted by a broken shaft, on the pedestal of which may still be read, in small and slowly perishing letters, the following inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of JONATHAN TRUMBULL, Esq., who, unaided by birth or powerful connections, but blessed with a noble and virtuous mind, arrived to the highest station in government. His patriot-

ism and firmness during 50 years' employment in public life, and particularly in the very important part he acted in the American Revolution, as Governor of Connecticut, the faithful page of History will record.

"Full of years and honors, rich in benevolence, and firm in the faith and hopes of Christianity, he died August 17th, 1785, *Ætatis* 75."

We may search "the faithful page of History" in vain for the record of a man who in utter self-forgetfulness, in earnest, patriotic devotion, toiled less for personal distinction and more for the good of a righteous cause than did he. Omitting the customary biographer's summing up of a career and estimate of a character, one thing may be said: he gained the supreme political honor of the present time and all time — a clean record. And if our poets are doing anything more than singing a melodious song to the words "The path of duty is the way to glory", there is glory enough at the end of such a life as his whose epitaph we read on the old tombstone at Lebanon; for, in a high official position, in the days of storm and stress, he never swerved from the path of duty.





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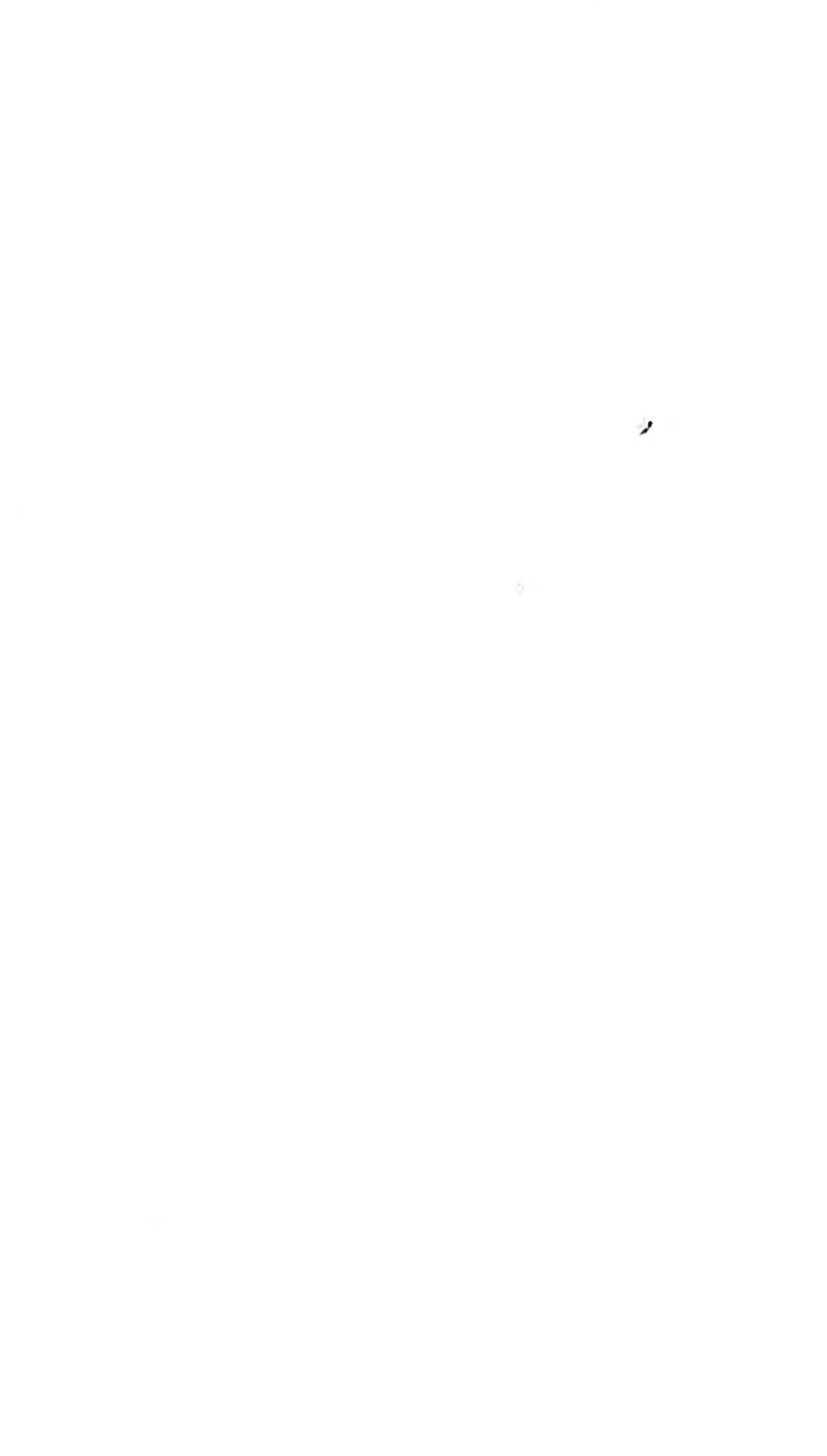
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